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LORD FALCONBERG'S HEIR.

VOL. II.



*Rare*

# LORD FALCONBERG'S HEIR.

A Novel.

BY

CHARLES CLARKE,

AUTHOR OF "CHARLIE THORNHILL," "WHICH IS THE WINNER,"  
"THE BEAUCLERCS," ETC., ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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# LORD FALCONBERG'S HEIR.

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## CHAPTER I.

### LORD HAWKESTONE'S ROAD HOME.

THE Hotel Maivalt was in those days, and may be now, for anything I know to the contrary, one of the most cheerful, cleanly, and well-managed establishments in that part of the country. By-the-way, I call it the Hotel Maivalt improperly; that was the name of its proprietor, and its proprietor's son, who possibly now enjoys his father's shoes and custom. It has a name, the Prinzenhof, or Hotel Prince Maurice de Nassau. It was then situated in a pretty, hilly, well-wooded country, which cannot have run away, and was in its season—for Cleves has its season—the resort of most wealthy and, being wealthy, respectable burghers of the cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Leipzig. I don't think it touches them by train even now; one must post from Emmerich, or there-

abouts. Dutchmen have small practice in dealing with hills, and the Clevischeberg is really quite a mountain—that is, for those parts.

Being an uninteresting place, as times go, that is, when one goes to the sources of the Nile in the Easter vacation, and cannot qualify for the most unexacting of travellers' clubs without having smoked in Tobolsk, bathed in the Bosphorus, or shot buffalos on a prairie, the reader will perhaps wonder first how I came to recollect such a place, and secondly why I have ever mentioned it.

Well, I recollect it so well, because I was once there, waiting for remittances; and an undergraduate's remittances (I was then an undergraduate) are or used to be a long time on the road; so that I had plenty of leisure to know all about it, and indeed to become attached to the place, and to a very stout young woman, who came from Dutch-land and dined at the *table d'hôte* daily, sitting next to me. Her father afterwards showed me much attention and his pictures in Rotterdam. My heart was then young and tender, and my appetite strong and lusty as an eagle's. Alas! since then my heart has become hard and callous, and my craving for the affections of stout young Dutch women is as *nil*. I used to go out and take tea or wine and smoke cigars near the grave



of Prinz Maurice, and have watched many twinkling feet of a summer's evening at the Thiergarten, while my remittances were on the road. That's how I come to recollect all this so well. But at last the remittances came to hand, and I have not called upon those stores of my memory until now.

And now, as a matter of business, I must tell you why I have mentioned it now. Lord Hawkestone chose to go there as his road to the cities of Holland—and there he was. He stood at the back of the Hotel Prince Maurice leaning over the long wooden balcony, which was bare as yet (for the creepers were not out), looking far away over the Rhine towards Rotterdam. Herr Maivalt stood by him; and, as a judicious landlord, refrained from breaking in upon his reverie. One advantage humility of birth has in the ignorance of our foreign neighbours: to an Englishman with a full pocket every land is a land of equality, if not of paternity. We are all 'Milords,' and Herr Maivalt had no idea that his present guest was one atom more exalted in degree than myself.

I have often tried to explain this in such languages as I am master of, and I find that it is the thing for all authors to know all languages, and some even to descend into the dialects,

*patois*, or whatever they may be called. Do they learn them after they begin writing, or is it a preparatory canter to the race they have to run ?

Notwithstanding this the Germans, especially those of the middle class, do remain curiously ignorant of the word 'gentleman,' and its application. They cannot comprehend an equality as gentlemen, and an inequality as regards mere rank. Having none of it themselves, it is as unintelligible to them as the principles of Buddhism or the position of Mr Beales. Logicians might be tempted to conceive of it as, Genus, gentleman ; and Difference, high birth, forming a species, nobleman ; but for the indefinite sense of the word 'gentleman,' leaving us as badly off as ever. For there are gentlemen of very high birth who are not noblemen, and noblemen who are not gentlemen nor of high birth. So we hand it over to Lord Dundreary as one of those things which no man could understand.

'This is a fine country, for Holland, Monsieur,' said my lord, who was, with his fine delicate features and tall well-proportioned figure, a very admirable specimen of the English gentleman, by the side of the intelligent little business-like working man whom he was addressing.

‘It is, Monsieur,’ replied Herr Maivalt in very good French, but with a very bad accent. ‘It is; we think this and Arnheim quite the prettiest part of Holland, though, for the matter of that, we are in Prussia.’

‘And what is that high tower that I see there?’ inquired Lord Hawkestone, looking towards the part of the town and country visible from the Hotel.

‘That is the Castle of Schwanenburg: one of your English queens lived there till she married your Henry the Eighth, the great Reformer.’

‘Indeed,’ said he, though what his ideas of Henry the Eighth’s religious sentiments may have been depended entirely on the school of History in which his lordship had been instructed. Froude had not enlightened the world on those subjects as yet. ‘And by what road can I get most readily to Utrecht and Rotterdam, so as to see the best of the Dutch cities on my way to England?’

‘And when does Monsieur resume his journey?’ Herr Maivalt was alive to the pain of losing so good a guest in the dull season.

‘Probably this afternoon.’

‘Then Monsieur will require his carriage?’

‘Ay; and the springs? but my servant has seen to that.’

‘The roads are good. Sandy about here. Monsieur will leave this by Cranenburg for Nimeguen, where Monsieur can sleep. Then to-morrow you can cross the Rhine for Arnheim. Then along the right bank to Utrecht; thence to Amsterdam, and by the Hague to Rotterdam. Ah, the Hague is a charming place. Let me recommend to Monsieur the Hotel du Vieux.’ Saying which he politely gave Lord Hawkestone one of his own cards and one of the hotel in question; and Lord Hawkestone ordered his bill and his carriage to be ready at two o’clock.

One other favour Herr Maivalt asked of Lord Hawkestone; he felt it was a great liberty, but it would be a great assistance, as milord had taken the only horses which they had unengaged at the Poste for that day. ‘Would he be so kind as to give a seat in the rumble (coupé he called it) by the side of his valet to a young gentleman, a boy, a *Knabe*, on his way home from Düsseldorf; *ein junger Engländer*,’ added he, as he saw some hesitation on Lord Hawkestone’s countenance.

‘An English boy? Certainly. And have you English people living here?’

‘We have had last year an English mister

and his wife, and a young man, a great chasseur, who shot snipe and quail here. There is, too, a Scotchman, not an Englishman, who has been living at the Thiergarten.'

'And this boy—he is a gentleman's son?'

'Gentleman—he is charming—but not noble as far as I know;' and beyond that Herr Maivalt knew nothing. 'He lives near Cranenburg: his grandfather dined here yesterday.'

'What the fine old man, of enormous size, with the white beard, who talked of pictures and racing?'

'Yes; Herr Jansen. He's Dutch, but the boy is English.' And at two o'clock Lord Hawkestone was carrying George Fellowes to his grandfather's house on the main road beyond Cranenburg.

Lord Hawkestone found his companion intelligent beyond his years; in everything but about himself and his family. He lived, as he said, in a cottage with his grandfather and mother. He seemed to have known but few persons beside them and his school-fellows. He was very open, confiding, as far as he could be, and independent in thought and expression; but he had small experience of the world, and of home nothing to tell.

Lord Hawkestone was a different man from what he had been. To a very casual observer his delicacy of constitution would have shown itself. To those who had known him formerly the change would have been most apparent. His features, always well-defined, had attained a tenuity which was remarkable, and his cheeks had lost all roundness and freshness of colour. What there was was bright and red, and only came with some sudden excitement of pain or pleasure. He had travelled from Italy too rapidly, and felt the cold much. Even now he had set himself a task to do he had better have been without. He was only fit to be nursed instead of visiting Dutch cities.

He had started from Cleves as he imagined well. He had not been half-an-hour on the road before he felt cold and ill, and that recurrence of fainting, which he had felt some years ago. But he had no idea of being stopped by such symptoms. His end was England, and having embarked on the Dutch *détour* he had made up his mind to go through with it.

But it brought him into contact with some of our *dramatis personæ* in a sufficiently simple way, and I must relate the facts which further the action of our tale.

'Ah, there's mamma,' said the boy. 'Lord Hawkestone, may I tell them to stop, we're very near home.' As he spoke he looked up, and saw that his companion was ill. The lad stopped the carriage, and the valet released him. His mother, too, had stopped when she heard the boy's shout.

Lord Hawkestone was scarcely able to rise, but he did so, putting forth all his strength; and received the thanks of Margaret, who had brought them with her to the carriage door.

Lord Hawkestone's illness did not prevent him from recognizing Margaret's beauty; and as his valet was loud in his protestations of the impossibility of proceeding without some hot brandy and water as a restorative, he was compelled to accept the hospitality of the cottage, which the boy's mother was equally compelled to offer.

'We've plenty of brandy, ma'am, the very best,' said the valet, 'but we can't do without hot water. Perhaps you would allow us to get some from your house.'

*Bon gré mal gré* there was a stoppage; and Lord Hawkestone found himself in a very dilapidated state in the presence of his fine old white-bearded giant of the day before, not a little to Bernhard Jansen's surprise.

## CHAPTER II.

## LORD HAWKESTONE INCREASES HIS ACQUAINTANCE.

IF Bernhard Jansen was very English in England, he had become equally Dutch again now. When Lord Hawkestone entered the house, he found his host with a large meerschaum pipe in his mouth, and enjoying his bottle of Hocheimer; his daughter having gone out for a stroll, to leave him in undisturbed enjoyment of his pleasures. She had, however, returned with the visitor, and now busied herself about the household affairs. It was not long before the hot water was forthcoming; and the shivering fit having passed away, his lordship began to feel better. He looked from his hostess to her father and back again; but good-looking as she was, his attention finally settled on the old man.

Two-thirds of Lord Hawkestone's regiment would have recognised Jansen. They would have remembered to have heard, if they were still in the Guards, his stupendous 'four to one,' or



‘seven to four,’ against a favourite; and they would have recalled many a cheerful *mot* of the Anglican-Dutchman, who never lost his temper with his money, whatever might have been his bark upon other occasions. It was, however, a few of the privileged that had borrowed of him; and certainly none upon such terms, as to make the old man remarkable among the Shylocks of Europe. Such extensive operations as Harold Falcon’s with Herr Jansen had been rare.

But Lord Hawkestone had not been a betting man, and certainly not a borrowing one. He had in his day been at race-courses often enough; but they were such that even the charms of Bernhard Jansen’s voice and offers, to say nothing of his physique, had escaped his notice. Lord Hawkestone put his pony on with a friend, or got Harold to do it for him, on the Derby or the Goodwood cup; hence the certain pleasures of personal acquaintance with the ring had not been added to the uncertainties of having to pay or to receive. Any gentlemen, takers of the odds, backers of horses, will tell you which is the more frequent operation, notwithstanding the fluctuations of Hermit’s year. Jansen was equally ignorant of his guest; and, excepting from his grandson’s in-

trodition, would have had no knowledge of his name or title.

Lord Hawkestone apologized for the liberty of having a shivering fit on a public road, and so near to a stranger's residence, to his inconvenience.

‘The inconvenience must be greater to you, my lord.’ And the expression came out as glibly as if Jansen had never left England, but was talking to some of his old patrons at the ‘corner.’ With a man who spoke such highly conventional English as this in Prussia or Holland (the latter for choice), whichever it might be, it was not difficult to enter into conversation, as his lordship continued to thaw under the influence of the hot brandy and water. It is but fair to say that Jansen was not as pleased as he pretended to be, and would have well dispensed with this chance visit. Being there the new comer could not be turned out ; being ill he must be allowed some time to recruit before proceeding ; and having a very handsome, kind, and noble physiognomy, the old carver might have had something less pleasant to look at. Besides, with all his independence, Jansen liked a gentleman ; and he had been long enough among us to know one by sight.

Now, where had old Jansen seen that face before? Not that face—nothing so fair or delicate, so fine, so attenuated; but that expression, that trick, with dark hair and eyes, and a brown healthful complexion, so like, and yet not the same.

And then Lord Hawkestone, after some more conversation on his journey, his designs, and his regrets, turned to Margaret. He thought he had seen few faces so beautiful, so prepossessing, and withal so careworn. A widow, he thought, she must be; and made no allusion that could pain her. We inflict wounds very often when we have no intention of doing so, and fire off words which take effect like stray shots in a neighbourhood full of windows. It's astonishing how many metaphorical windows we break, or rather how many panes we crack.

‘And my young friend here is called Fellowes,’ said Lord Hawkestone, ‘one of the Norfolk Fellowes, I presume.’ Lord Hawkestone felt that he had no right to presume that every man of a good name was of a good family; and he blushed lest he should have hurt the feelings of the lady, who answered ‘No.’

His blushes, however, were not much to hers; and it is to be hoped they are not essentially a mark of pain.

'No!' repeated Jansen, but he said no more, and Hawkestone sought no further information on that score. So he asked, not to break the subject too abruptly, for what he was being educated. 'I have had all the information about the English chaplain at Düsseldorf, and the young gentleman's own wishes, but might I ask yours.'

'We have endeavoured to give him a good general education to fit him for any walk of life. He is over-young to choose yet.' And now the theme had ceased to be distasteful.

'I know what I should like to be,' said the boy, seating himself near Lord Hawkestone, his ride with whom had made him even less reticent than usual.

'Then speak out, boy, and tell me,' for Lord Hawkestone was attracted by his beauty.

'I should like to be a painter,' replied the boy at once.

'That's his grandfather's wish, my lord,' said his mother, 'not mine.'

'If you differ, it will be hard for him to please both. He is in a fine country for the study of art now;' to which Margaret replied,

'That's why I dislike it for one reason. I wish him to live in England.'

‘But I not,’ said the old man, using unconsciously his country’s idiom. ‘That is why I prefer him to stop here.’

‘Has he studied for that?’ inquired Hawkestone.

‘Not especially,’ said the cloud-compelling Dutchman. ‘But if the mother will be persuaded we shall send him to Munich.’

‘Why not to England?’ said his lordship. ‘You scarcely know, as you have been so long away, you tell me, the advance that high art has made of late years in our country. I don’t so much mean art itself, for that must take a longer time, so much as the feeling for it among all classes.’

‘Do you know the reason of that, my lord?’

‘There are many. The earliest, strange to say, was the religious movement; and even now whether that was cause or effect I can’t tell. The contemplation of the good and great in one way may have exalted the taste and feeling in all. The earliest and best pictures of the high school have all the stamp of religion or purity at least; and symbolically if not actually of a better state. Holman Hunt and Millais, whom you do not know yet, are great examples of this theory, if it be a right one.’

‘I think we do know something in this country already of the men you mention. Not in our public galleries, of course; but among our private collectors such names are not overlooked. You have the Manchester school however to out-bid us.

‘The Manchester men seem to me to have done their share towards the encouragement of art. They are rich, and great buyers. If not always discriminating at least generous patrons.’

‘Generous, my lord—yes; if the encouragement of art as a speculation can be called so. Generous enough in putting money into their own pockets.’

‘I think you wrong them.’

‘Then it is because they’ve turned their attention to your railroads, instead of art; and in a few years there’ll be a thriving trade in them, as there has been in pictures. They only ask one question when they buy, which is, will it sell?’

‘You seem to be familiar with our market, Mr Jansen.’

‘I lived in it for years, my lord. I was a tradesman in it, and had many opportunities of judging. There were exceptions—but the reasons for buying, though varied, were not, as you

believe, a love of art. They saw you with a fine gallery, and as they had money, they wanted one made to order too. They couldn't buy old masters; they couldn't be manufactured fast enough, so they bought moderns. And when they found a mine in some unknown names, they bought them up by means of a dealer, till the thing was blown, and they began to sell again at double the price. There was a great glut of old masters at one time, manufactured for the occasion, but the competition ruined itself. I've been in an iron-master's house in the Midland Counties where, with one trifling exception, every frame was worth more than the picture it contained. I don't think he knew it, and I'm sure his neighbours didn't; but the trade, bless your soul, they know where to place their good pictures too well to send them to the *parvenus*.'

If Lord Hawkestone had been astonished at the old gentleman's knowledge of England, he was much more so at his boldness in displaying it. His energy of speech was marvellous as he rose and walked up and down, stopping now and then as he argued the matter, and puffing out between whiles volumes of smoke. 'We've very little money here, it's true, to give a spurious support to art, but we've none of that

iron and cotton patronage to spoil what we have. I'm a Dutchman, my lord, not a German, and you may laugh at me, because it is our great merchants who have all the treasures, excepting those that lie scattered about in palaces and public buildings; but then a Dutch aristocracy is its tradesmen, and neither we nor our neighbours have any vulgar affectation of what we cannot feel, and were never educated to understand. We found that school a good receptacle for newly-made ancestors. They'd buy anything with taper fingers and a ruff and sword—and though they paid more for a Vandyke, as being more aristocratic and harder to make, they were liberal enough for a Sir Peter Lely or a Sir Godfrey Kneller. I once knew a modern cardinal by Rubens sold for a large sum of money. He took his place as the ancestor of a man whose father swept out the shop in which he had made his money. You English are a very odd people in some things, and that's one of them. It is your irrepressible energy, I suppose, which enables you to deceive yourselves, while we are satisfied with deceiving others. I daresay Englishmen think Charles the First was a much better man than William of Orange.' At which Lord Hawkestone only smiled.



‘But you must admit that increased wealth—’

‘Gives all the desire, but none of the taste.’

‘Wealth, Mr Jansen, with us is civilization; and with civilization comes knowledge, and with knowledge, taste,’ said Lord Hawkestone.

‘But that peculiar taste requires a knowledge which you never give—the opportunity of seeing everything without paying for it. Poor men, and consequently the masses, have not the opportunities we give them. You will be a long time educating the masses as we have done.’

Lord Hawkestone felt that it was so, and said as much. ‘But wealthy cotton-spinners and iron-masters do not come under the category of the masses, and it was they whom I was defending from your censures. I don’t know whether what I’m going to say proves much, but it proves something to the point. A Manchester audience is the most discerning of musical critics; and I once heard that, next to the *élite* of London society, its decisions were most highly prized by our *artistes*.’

‘It does say something for your argument; but even then you have not convinced me that I was wrong in the outset. Your picture-buying, excepting among your nobility and some few great men, is a matter of speculation. You have few patrons of art among your wealthy tradesmen.’

As Lord Hawkestone was about endeavouring to refute this dogma, the door opened, and the boy and his mother returned to the room. 'Here comes the innocent cause of our controversy. I have never got as far as my original proposition.' And here the Englishman looked first at the mother and then at the boy. 'I have never yet had the opportunity of saying that, if you will trust him to my charge, whenever you send him over, I will do all I can to help him in his object, whatever it may be.' And then Lord Hawkestone rose to take his leave. He did so, thanking his host for the shelter he had afforded him, and assuring them both of his capability to proceed with perfect safety. He put on some warmer clothing, however, before starting; and then repeating his hope that they would not forget his invitation to Hawkestone, and exchanging cards and addresses with the old giant, he put himself once more into his carriage, and went on his road. The old man accompanied him to his carriage, and as he took his leave he said,

'No one could feel more grateful for your kindness to my grandson than I do. He is scarcely old enough to profit by your lordship's offer, nor does his mother fully comprehend the extent of its advantages. Should he ever come

to England, I will venture to take you at your word, as I am sure I may do. But it may be as well to say that I trust your countenance will be directed only to a means of honest independence. George will not be able to lead a life of idleness ; nor, if he could, should I desire him to do so.' Lord Hawkestone put out his hand to old Bernhard Jansen, nodded affirmatively to him, and in another minute was on his road to Nimeguen.

His reflections as he rolled along a not very good road, that is, not good for the springs of one's own carriage, were amusing enough, but puzzling, very puzzling. Now how could a man who had lived in England manifestly a great many years, notwithstanding some marked accent, have left it to live in a sequestered spot on the borders of Holland and Prussia? And his life seemed to have been a strange one altogether. He'd have thought it very much more extraordinary if he had known it all. Old Jansen had acknowledged the high art ; the old carving, the picture-dealing, the fancy portraits, old china, and other curiosities, in which he had traded ; but he had said nothing about the ring at Newmarket, where he had been known ; nor the money-lending business, in which his cousin Harold had so fatally participated.

Herr Jansen was not morally reticent of these

things. He felt no real shame that they should have formed an episode in his history : that they should have helped to make a few hundreds for his wife and daughter. He only felt that they were wrong because they had been unsuccessful : and that's the reason he was silent about them. I don't know even that he would have been sorry that the boy should have known them, but for their utter failure. He had so much the elements of success in his physical being, so much strength, size, energy, vitality, that he was ashamed of having been beaten at anything.

When Bernhard Jansen had taken to the turf as a profession, he had been led to believe that it was a certain fortune ; and he had been very ambitious to accomplish that end. Now, in the way of professional betting, the turf was nothing of the sort. It was a moderate but certain income, with the chance of a great *coup*, rarely—just now and then—achieved under circumstances of more luck than honesty. In Jansen's case they never came off ; and it was not in itself allied to his capacity or taste. Men liked his size, his ways, his honest dealings ; but, like heavy bodies, he was slow, and lighter and more pressing vehicles cut in before him. For a money-lender he was too merciful. He wanted more of the Shylock to

succeed in that. He made bad debts through his generosity, and was not high enough in his rate of interest to make a living. He never exceeded thirty per cent., and often had to borrow the money himself at fifteen. It was his fate to have some ready money in those days, and to have run up against Harold Falcon in his necessities. Now his necessities were so very great that he must have ruined any Jew—why not Jansen? Then came the mysterious whispers, and suspicions about his daughter. To be sure he had allowed his wife to send her out to work at Woodstock; and he knew best the woman's motive—so strong an one—marriage with a gentleman, forsooth! And when he came to that, the old man hung his head, and a tear ran down to his beard. Prettily it had ended. When his boy had to go to England, if that should be his ultimate destination, he would himself accompany him. Lord Hawkestone looked like a gentleman, and doubtless was what he represented himself to be; but he had not entertained Englishmen under his roof before, nor would he do so again if he knew how to prevent it. He had forgotten that men entertain angels sometimes unawares.

But here he was, and here was Margaret; he with his sorrows, she with her regrets: and he

had saved some few thousands, which should go to Margaret's boy, together with her own. They were rich almost in his own country, and selected their acquaintances where they liked. Why should Margaret so much wish the lad to find employment in England? Let him forget a country which had so many unhappy reminiscences for them. Nevertheless, as he turned Lord Hawkestone's card round in his hand, he thought it might be a fine opening for his grandson. The man had evidently taken a liking to the lad. He put down his daughter's beauty very much under its true appreciation, possibly even in the present case; the power of beauty is so very subtle.

## CHAPTER III.

## EGMONT.

AT this time of railroads and other safe investments for honestly-made money, a suburban retreat, not to use an Hibernicism, is a luxury only to be enjoyed about five-and-twenty miles out of town. Men who are not of robust constitutions, especially as regards the brain, are willing to satisfy themselves with something short of twenty, say fifteen; but their purses must be strong, if their brains are weak, for such luxuries. Those with more marrow and fewer debentures, seek their pastures further afield. A few suffer, it is true. A most respectable man of middle age, who has worked hard all his life, pushed further and further out of London, finds himself rapidly approaching the midland counties, and reaches his office in the Strand, or a little east of Temple Bar, with a confused notion of everybody's business but his own. For it must be confessed that a suburban railway is as very a

gossiping-shop as any old woman's boudoir in Bath or Cheltenham. Even that confusion of ideas is not allowed to last long. In no time he finds himself shelved—a valetudinarian who has nothing in the world the matter with him, but an inability to stand a daily shaking and jolting, rattling and screeching, three hours out of his twelve.

‘Head all wrong?’ says his friend and neighbour, Blister. ‘Thought so—not surprised at it. Ah! feels as if the top of your skull was coming off; yes, yes, and nothing worth the trouble when you look inside. Ah! you must give up work—don’t let him go to town any more, at present—quiet, perfect quiet is what he wants.’

‘Well, Blister, what’s the matter with poor Dogberry?’ says Mrs Blister.

‘Not much, my dear—head won’t stand his work, that’s all—wants rest.’

‘Work! Why he’s nothing to do. He always goes up at nine and comes down by the four-o’clock train.’

‘Yes, that is the work. It’s a splendid thing for us. There have been more cases of softening of the brains the last ten years than in ten centuries before the railroads. It’s the poor men



that can't live near town that it sends to us.'

Now Egmont was not precisely one of these places ; for it is but a short distance from London : and to judge by those of its inhabitants that we know, they have not yet suffered from the railway. The soft-brained ones were already there when old Lady Falcon left Harold her villa and his twenty thousand pounds.

At that time there was no railway : and the society of Egmont was courtly and aristocratic. The place was small, pretty, countryfied, and consisted entirely of villas and what auctioneers call Detached Family Mansions, built of red brick, with stone copings : they had a look of Horace Walpole about them ; and those that were not heir-looms from the old nobility of George the First or Anne, and occupied by the owners themselves, were the retreats or resting-places of men and women who had been famous in their day : *littérateurs*, actors and actresses, curiosity collectors, and an artist of high class. There was scarcely a shop to be met with in the place ; and the people were as independent of one another as if they lived in Grosvenor-square.

But it so happened that Egmont was one of the first places affected by the new mania ; and

being not far from one of the leading roads out of the metropolis was peculiarly obnoxious to the scandalous speculation that set in as soon as Mr Huskisson had been killed. It seemed to be no sooner ascertained that a great national calamity might be made to coincide with great enterprise, than they set to work with a will. It was not bad for Egmont itself; that is, for the brick and mortar of which it was composed; and had there been a shop or two, they might have benefited by the rail. Property would have been more valuable had the owners waited; but they were just the persons who could afford not to wait: and as the engines rushed in they rushed out of it, at any price they could get. The cheerful, highbred-looking place became almost a howling wilderness. The lovers' walks and authors' seats were disfigured by smoke, dirt, cart-grease, navvies, and cranes; and within half-a-dozen years the society of the place was as much changed as if the Vale of Tempe had been put down in the middle of Manchester. Lady Trumpington's had fallen into the hands of a really conscientious lawyer, who went to his office in Parliament-street with the regularity of some watches and clocks. Lord Manhattan's villa had been bought for next to nothing by an American ship-broker of

no questionable character, having emerged thrice from bankruptcy, each time with more horses, more plate, more property, and more impudence than ever. The doctor, a capital fellow, was a fixture, being quite as ready to kill commoners as lords. The parson, a pure aristocrat, had walked off, leaving a curate, under the impression that he was quite good enough for the newcomers. A pork-butcher opened the first shop in Egmont, having taken one of five hideous tenements on the main road, knowing that our friend, Mr F——, the great Salopian man-in-the-moon, had declared that meat to be the true radical form. Sir Benjamin Scarecrow, the great authority on the game-laws, gave way to Mr Smithson—of Smithson, Colt, and Harrow, the ironmongers in Oxford-street; and Mrs Startenham, the great tragic actress, who has achieved an European reputation, sold her beautiful cottage to an old lodging-house keeper from Pimlico. The squire—but more of the squire of Egmont by-and-by.

It seems that it was just about this time, or shortly before it, that old Dame Falcon, the great-aunt of Harold, died. She was not Lady Falcon, but had gone by that title among her dependants in Wales and elsewhere. The villa she had

once lived in at Egmont became distasteful to her, and she had ceased to live in it. But she had never sold it, and disposed of it by will ; giving it to her nephew Harold Falcon, because he seemed to be the one of all her legatees who could not possibly stand in need of it. What did he want with a house ? Well, to be candid, the old lady had a reason perhaps, morally speaking not a good one—but it was one, and will satisfy those who think a bad one better than none at all.

She left it, with his share of the money, to Harold, because she was sure he would be a thorn in the side of the new inhabitants of her old residence. ‘I know he’s fond of horse-racing, and gambling, and plenty of fast society, and that he has done all those sorts of odd things that young men of his class will do ; so I’m going to leave him the villa, with a condition that he must live in it three months out of the twelve, more or less. I shouldn’t wonder if he opened the eyes of his neighbours by taking that Mademoiselle Pirouette down, about whom Hawkestone used to lecture him. I hope he’ll frighten ’em all out of the place ; for he won’t be able to associate with one of them.

However, he did not take down Mademoiselle Pirouette ; and since his aunt’s death it would

have been difficult to have found a more steady fellow for his age than Harold Falcon; and when obliged to be among them, his neighbours were rather flattered by his attentions than otherwise.

‘Well, Helen, when does Lord Falconberg talk of going down to Egmont?’

‘Papa talks of Easter; but that will depend upon Hawkestone’s return. Have you any idea when that is to be expected?’

‘The last time I heard from him he was about leaving Lucerne. He didn’t say so, but I fancy he was rather tired with his journey, and meant to rest a day or two. If he gets to the Hague he is sure to rest a few days there, if not at Amsterdam or Rotterdam.’

‘What could he see in that place to stay for?’ said Lady Helen, whose sympathies were rather with fine scenery than with fine cities.

‘The Hague is a place of peculiar interest, unique of its kind. I have often thought Egmont might have been like it on a very small scale before the railroad came to it.’

‘A pin’s head to a cannon-ball; a twenty-four pounder or whatever you call them,’ said the lady. ‘And what can you say to Rotterdam?’

‘I can say this, that I never was so near committing involuntary suicide as in that great com-

mercial city. I was shaving at my window, in what has always appeared to me as the only hotel in the place, when the masts of a vessel passed so close to me as to startle me very effectually. I cut myself rather severely, but not in the right place to produce any sensation, excepting an unpleasant one to myself. Upon my word, with all its dirt and disorder, and there's plenty of both, I think it's as amusing as Venice, and cleaner.'

'And what of his health, Harold. Do you think he has been a gainer by his winters abroad?'

'Yes, I do. He is not more prudent than other invalids; but he's better away from England in bad weather. Besides, ill health will never make a coward of Hawkestone. If he were at home, he'd never be happy unless he were hunting or shooting; and any severe cold might be fatal.'

'I should so like to nurse him, Harold. I'm sure good nursing is as good as a fine climate. I can't bear to think of him alone, even in Italy.'

'Should you be happier if I went? I will do so with pleasure, next season.'

'No, that would never do. You must stay for my father.'

'Your father's health is good, and likely to continue so, let us hope.'

‘Yes, but not his spirits. Something weighs upon him.’

‘Oh, he’s disappointed because Hawkestone doesn’t marry Lady Di.’

‘And why shouldn’t he marry Lady Di?’

‘Because he won’t marry anybody. He has peculiar notions on the subject of matrimony.’

‘But he must know that she likes him. I know it at all events; and I should hardly think a more suitable match could be found in England. Surely he has no objection to such a marriage as that,’ for Helen was fond of her friend; and to have made a friend of Lady Helen Falcon was to have a champion in any cause.

‘His objections are not to Lady Di.’

‘To what, then? My father wishes it, so does the duchess, so do I.’

‘His objections are to himself—his health. I wish he would marry, but he will not.’

‘Do what you can. You have great influence with him. Then we need not trouble ourselves about nursing him; and they could live where they pleased.’

‘I have urged him. I would give all I have to see Hawkestone with a wife at the Castle, and once more as he was years ago.’

‘Does he think so badly of himself?’ and as

this suggestion rose to Lady Helen's mind she looked more anxiously at her cousin than usual.'

'He does think badly of himself. He saw Lobel the last time he was in England. He doesn't like him, but he has the highest opinion of his talents.'

'And what did Lobel say?'

'That he might be kept alive with care. You know what that means, Helen?' Lady Helen's eyes were full of tears. 'Let us look it boldly in the face.'

Lady Helen could look nothing boldly in the face at that moment. Not that the suspicion of the truth had come upon her suddenly, but she had never had to face it before. 'And what does it mean, in its fullest extent?' said she.

'Less than it says. I would not give you pain, Helen, but it means a question of time. Hawkestone knows that. But he is less unhappy than any of us. He has no fears; and if it be true that anxiety darkens or shortens the last years or days of the doomed, he will be in no way affected by such feelings. His whole anxiety is for you and my uncle.' The tears were really now falling gently from Helen's eyes; and as Harold looked at her a pang came over him which nearly mastered his resolution. 'Ah,' thought he, 'what



would I now give to be able to wipe them away. How little we know the mischief that may be wrought by our want of consideration. There was a great truth involved in Harold Falcon's mind at that moment. Who would be so ready to repress belief in eternal retribution for temporal wickedness, if he regarded the results of his actions instead of their more immediate consequences ? God only knows the consequences of our simplest actions.

And then Lord Hawkestone came home ; and in the first flush of his return it was not easy to see that much change had taken place. He was far from what men are accustomed to call an invalid. He was to be seen in society, at the clubs, at dinners, at Lord Falconberg's box with Lady Helen, not often at balls, it must be admitted, and he had his horses in town. Men did not yet ride in the Row at one o'clock ; but they often took a refresher after breakfast or before it, along the turf or round the Serpentine, and he and Harold were often to be seen among them. They neither of them did much in the world, so that they were just now uninteresting characters for a novel-writer. Yet all this time a few persons thought Lord Hawkestone looking thinner and paler. But no man that saw him in society

dreamt of the real and painful truth to which he had long reconciled himself.

‘Where are you going to dine to-day, Harold?’ said he as he rode down the Row with him towards Apsley House.

‘I was going to dine at the Club ; for I know your father and Lady Helen are going to dine at the Duke of Poitiers.’ Why are you not going?’

‘I don’t care to go out now ; it’s so hot. Let’s ride down to Richmond and dine there. We can get some white bait, and some of Ball’s twenty claret, and ride back in the cool of the evening.’ So they turned out of the Park, and crossing Piccadilly, rode down Grosvenor-place and away into the fresh air, out of the dust, which was flying, and from the crowd that was greeting them on all sides as they passed along.

They found the Castle Gardens full to overflowing. There was no dust on the river, but the noise was far beyond that of the streets. The Literary Dustmen’s dinner was to take place ; and Literary Dustmen, both before and after that event, are as the workmen of Babel. The Glacier Club was out on the same excursion too, and the development of muscular Christianity was great. Every room was engaged or nearly so ; but as our

radical friends would say, a bloated aristocrat can do anything; so they gave Hawkestone and Harold a room in which it seemed difficult to sit down, and in which it would have been impossible to carve a goose. As Hawkestone observed, when Harold made the remark, it was not necessary for many reasons: first, there would be no goose to carve; secondly, the Literary Dustmen were already employed upon the dissection of such geese as came before them, with a better chance of success.

‘Here’s a carriage, Harold,’ said his cousin, looking out of the window, ‘and a curiosity getting out of it.’ Harold went to the window, and saw a figure which might naturally have attracted any one’s attention.

It was a man of great size in bulk, but short of stature. He arrived in a yellow coach, whose panels were so quartered as to appear practising for a Lord Mayor’s day; and from the difficulty he found in getting out of it, must have been growing since he got into it. His face was all red, his clothes all black; but relieved by a preponderance of old-fashioned scarlet watch-ribbon worn in the old-fashioned way, with a large bunch of seals and keys attached to it. His hat had a fine roll in the brim with a certain width,

which was judiciously managed to take off somewhat of attention from the man himself. The glossy nature of the entire man, who looked new from head to foot, now that he was once out of his chariot, was that of the most prosperous bagman upon earth : a bagman of whom you might have been ashamed at Devonshire House, but whose heir you would like to have been, if a little short of money at the time of his death. He was followed by a beautiful girl of not more than sixteen or seventeen years of age.

Harold and his cousin were amused enough at the phenomenon from the yellow coach, and not less so at the great dissimilarity between father and daughter, for such was the relationship between them ; a relationship that might, as far as appearance went, be represented by Bismarck and moderation, or Disraeli and Parliamentary Consistency, Peto and punctuality of payment, or any other transparency of the age. At that moment, however, the waiter presented himself with a silver tureen and a professional flourish which denoted dinner, and the gentlemen sat down to table.

‘ Who is the gentleman who arrived just now in a yellow chariot ? ’

‘ Yellow chariot, sir ; yessir—which chariot, sir ? ’

‘The yellow chariot with a quantity of heraldic devices,’ said Lord Hawkestone.

‘Heraldic devices, yessir—certainly, sir.’

‘A coat of paint of divers colours on the panels,’ explained Harold.

‘Coat of paint, yessir. Inquire in the house, sir,’ and off rushed the waiter for information—and returned but little wiser.

‘Head-waiter, sir, can’t say, sir—doesn’t know.’ Saying which he took off the soup and levanted. After which the two gentlemen went on with their dinner and their conversation, regardless or forgetful of the stout man and the yellow coach.

But the fat man in the mean time was getting interested in the two gentlemen. Of course there are more obsequious waiters than one in a house like the Castle at Richmond; not all of exactly the same type, but more or less obsequious. This is especially the case when we travel in handsome yellow chariots and wear undeniably new clothes. An old hat and dusty boots only meets with that spurious sort of civility which is the inseparable accident of the genus waiter of any sort. It is not surprising therefore that our fat friend was soon in company with a gentleman who addressed him with—

‘Yessir, certainly, sir—white bait, sir, stoode heels’ (which we expect to be associated with tripe).

‘D— your heels, sir ; send the landlord.’ And the waiter being duly impressed with the solemnity of this language, did send the landlord.

‘Now, Ball, how are you ?’ said the irate old gentleman, when he found himself with Mr Ball before him. ‘’ow are ye ?’

‘Thank you, Mr Cripplegate, well. I hope you and Mrs Cripplegate are the same,’ bowing at the same time to the old gentleman and his daughter. For Mr Ball was not obsequious at all to fine clothes or fine carriages. Indeed Mr Ball was a very well-behaved and well-spoken gentleman, much better than his patron ; and utterly indifferent to everything but the realities of life. So he was happy to see such a molten image as Mr Cripplegate of the Fishmongers’ Company in his house. He was an old customer ; a good diner, who did justice to his cooks and his *cartes*, and good pay. Hence his energetic language on the subject of ‘stoode heels.’

‘Now, Ball, a nice little dinner, my friend, for two of us. I’m *on* (which he pronounced *hon*) *route* for my noo place at Hegmont.’ It was unlucky that it began with a vowel. It’s a charm-

ing place, Ball, charming—quite a gentleman's place—belonged to hold Squire Cavendish, one of the first families in England.'

'How many miles do you call it from here, Ball?' said he after he had allowed the honest landlord time to digest his information.

'We call it seven,' said Mr Ball.

'Ah, I see; seven to post, six to drive,' said he of the Fishmongers' Company laughing. 'And who have you here—very full?'

'Very full, sir; very full to-day—we've a large party in No. six; Mr Simcox.'

'Oh, I know, Simcox and Cogwell—carriage builders, made that yaller trap as I come down in—they ain't much—anybody helse, Ball?'

'There's a great dinner of the Literary Dustmen, Lord Folio in the chair, and Sir Cloudy Brevier, vice. Three guineas a-head.'

'You don't say so.' Literature rose a little for a minute or two in old Cripplegate's estimation, but went down again upon a consideration that it didn't happen every day. 'Ah! hannual, I suppose. They're only littery 'acks. Who's in the private rooms?' Upon which Mr Ball, who was quite aware of his guest's weakness, began to enumerate the best names he had on his list

for that day. 'There's Captain Sloper, of the Guards, and Sir Shane O'Neill—'

'Hirish beggar,' interrupts Cripplegate; 'o'ope he pays. Member for some place, ain't he? I know the county as 'ud soote him. Sli-go,' adds the old gentleman, after a pause in which the landlord didn't attempt to guess; 'only stops in Parliament to keep out o' the Bench.' And although his remarks were not complimentary, they were nearly true.

Then Mr Ball started again. 'There's an old acquaintance of yours, Mr Cripplegate, in the next room: Sir George Dashington and Sergeant Wigsby, with three or four more. They're giving a dinner to Judge Stringer.'

'Is the Judge here? I must go in after dinner; he'll be quite hurt unless I look in upon him.'

'There's a large party of the Glacier Club in the big room: they've got Professor Alpenstock in the chair. And there's Captain Falcon and Lord Hawkestone dining together—just come down for a ride, and going back again.'

'Captain Falcon! Is that the Captain Falcon who lives at Hegmont, Ball? Lord bless you! I know him; he's a neighbour of mine. I shouldn't



like to leave without paying my respects to him. Who's he got with him ?'

'Only his cousin, Lord Hawkestone.'

'Only,' thought Mr Cripplegate again, as he shuddered at Mr Ball's familiarity.

'Ah, Lord Hawkestone ; certainly. I'll get you to take my card in. They'll be near neighbours of mine ; and though Captain Falcon's is but a small place, one must be civil, you know, Ball. I'll just tell you what, between ourselves, I'm afraid our friend, Lord Hawkestone, isn't long for this world ; and the Captain's the heir. Not that I think of that much, but it's one's duty, as the squire of a place like that,'—here Ball opened his eyes, and the old fishmonger drew himself up,—'to make things agreeable to one's neighbours, great and small. "And though he feasted all the great, he ne'er forgot the small." Ay, Ball ? That's my motto ; and here comes the *sole au gratin* (which he called the Soul o' Grattan), so we'll sit down at once, my dear.' I regret to say that the excellent education he had provided for his daughter at London-super-Mare, at three hundred per annum, had taught her to blush for her father's vulgarity : but he was too good and too kind for her to be thoroughly ashamed of him.

It was a very painful, but not uncommon, social dilemma.

The fishmonger was not a man at any time to be put down by the conventionalities of life. He had two strong points—self-esteem and a love for the aristocracy. One could scarcely imagine their existence together in the person of Mr Cripplegate; but there they were. We leave an explanation to more careful philosophers, unless they are satisfied with that of total blindness to our own imperfections.

When Harold Falcon received his card he was entirely at a loss to know why, or by whose company, they were to be honoured.

‘Who the devil is Mr Cripplegate, waiter?’

‘Can’t say, sir,’ as usual.

‘Hawkestone, is he a friend of yours?’

‘No; don’t you know him?’

‘Not I,’ said Harold.

‘Then show him in,’ said the nobleman, laughing, as if he expected to see something remarkable.

And so he did: for he saw his friend of the yellow chariot, who, after claiming a sort of acquaintance with Harold, informed them both of his new purchase, and of his hope that the families would be on the best of terms.

‘ But, Mr Cripplegate, Lord Falconberg does not live in Egmont. It is my cousin only, Captain Falcon, whom you see there. He is your neighbour.’

‘ True, true, my lord ; but I know the family is often down there; for I took great care—very great care—to inquire who my neighbours were likely to be, and I heard all about it. You see where there’s ladies, and some rank—I may say some rank, for it’s been hintimated to me from the ’ighest quarters that I’m to be knighted, gentlemen—my lord, I mean—when things are so, of course, it becomes the hupper ten to look out. I’m a Tory to the back-bone.’

‘ Then I’m afraid you’ll find my father differ from you,’ said Lord Hawkestone, laughing, ‘ for he’s a terrible old Whig, worse than I am, or my cousin, Harold.’ This was rather hard upon the old gentleman, who, having accomplished his object of adding to his importance before Mr Ball, wished them both good evening. And this is the way Harold Falcon became acquainted with the new squire of Egmont.

## CHAPTER IV.

## A TOTAL DISREGARD OF THE UNITIES.

I HAVE the most sacred disregard for the unities, in everything but Aristotle and the Greek dramatists; and these latter cared very little about it. Nothing but a fear on the part of the French dramatists that they should revert to a barbarity and rudeness of construction, can excuse their quasi-adoption of them. The negative virtues of French tragedy, and their somewhat over-careful avoidance of impropriety, is a poor apology for a system unfitted to anything but the purest classic form. Corneille may well apologize for his adoption of it, if he does so by the condemnation of contemporary critics. What can we have to do with the magnificent sculpture of an *Œdipus*, a *Prometheus*, or an *Antigone*; and what influence upon art, as employed about imagination, are Racine or Voltaire likely to produce?

But I speak here not so much of unity of action, as of time or place. The novelist, who

may lie like an historian and create like a poet, must have some regard to the first of these. Any latitude you please I shall claim for time and place, so long as my scenes and their extension shall be made subservient to my end. You may take in the whole of a story at one view : and like a picture, rather than with a group of marble, you may enjoy the accessories of landscape and distance, without detriment to the main object of the design.

There are plenty of causes why the Greek drama should have admitted of these compressions, in the simplicity of primeval life, as to the subject represented from mythology or the heroic ages ; in the peculiar structure of their theatres ; their absence of scenic change ; and their inability to understand a convenience unconnected with their education. Not that they were themselves rude or uncultivated. Perish the thought ! They were men on the very pinnacles of education and refinement.

But man refuses to recognize their rules in a modern novel ; and Horace himself forgot to mention them in that light sketchy article of his to the Pisos, in which he deals with the requisites to form a poet or dramatist, in as far as he can be made, not born.

In consequence of this hardihood on my part, I derive a great advantage over those who would not object to extend their views to an action of thirty hours' duration. To be sure some speak of fourteen days, during which they may dine and sleep, and get up again, before the eyes of the reader, without inflicting upon him any gross exaggeration of probability. The historian, it is true, is permitted to annihilate space and time, and to detail various actions without respect to even possibility. Alas! that we should have to say so. I am going to ask for years; but I hope my act will enable me so to connect the time past with the present and to come, that we shall not be prevented from taking in the whole at one view. If I do this I believe I shall have done enough to have satisfied the most exacting of critics.

Lord Hawkestone, since I first took my reader down to Hawkestone Castle, had apparently progressed but slowly towards the end which his physicians had unquestionably prognosticated. Still he was delicate-looking, and unable certainly to take the same liberties with himself which he had done formerly. It was not the men and women who met him in society who remarked his moments of languor, or understood the change

that had taken place in his general habits and appearance. In society no man saw that peculiarly anxious look which stole upon him so often when he sat thoughtfully in an arm-chair after unwonted exercise. His hands were more transparent, and the pure veins coursed one another so very visibly along his temples that it gave an idea of delicacy, which he admitted to no one but Harold.

To him he made no secret of his very gradual decay. He had understood it this seven or eight years: and he spoke without the slightest reserve on subjects connected with it. He was especially anxious that Harold should marry, and he made no hesitation of mentioning Lady Helen in connection with him, not only to Harold himself, but to other very intimate friends.

This had gone on for years. Harold was constantly with his uncle and cousin during Hawkestone's absence, and now that he was returned, he was with them more frequently than ever. The tastes of the two men were alike in many respects: Lord Hawkestone had never been a gambler, and Harold had scarcely betted twenty pounds for years; but the former kept a few horses, and Harold took an active part in their training when his cousin was out of the way. I

said before that Hawkestone would go out hunting, although he was forbidden to do so : at any rate he was forbidden to ride hard ; and now he refused obstinately to go abroad again this season, unless his health positively drives him away : at all events he intended to shoot the covers at Hawkestone, even if he went to the south again for the cold of February, March, and April.

It may be easily understood that a person of this kind was very difficult to manage. Lady Helen and her father tried their hand without success ; and they both began to believe in his eventual recovery. They went backwards and forwards constantly to Egmont, until it began to be regarded in the light of the family villa, as much as the property of Harold alone.

In the mean time the old women in town could not see two such excellent fish in their way without having a throw for them. One of course was only a trout and the other a salmon ; but they were both worth the trouble, and valuable when taken. As yet the old anglers hadn't hit upon the right fly.

‘My dear Mrs Chatters,’—the wife of the honourable Colonel Chatters, an old cavalry officer, but still a young man,—‘why doesn't that Lord Hawkestone marry?’



‘I haven’t the slightest idea, Lady Pendleton. I’m sure it’s not for the want of encouragement,’—that was rather hard upon a lady with five daughters and only a moderate jointure,—‘but I’ll ask Lord Belleville for you if you like: I believe Lady Diana’s the only person Lord Hawkestone has ever exhibited a *penchant* for.’

‘I don’t think Lady Di is in fault, my dear,’ replied the ill-natured old woman.

‘I don’t know how that may be,’ says Mrs Chatters again, who was fond of Diana, ‘but there’s his cousin Harold Falcon: now really he’d be the best speculation for you of the two, if he were not so abominably *épris* of Lady Helen.’

‘Mrs Chatters, my dear,’ and Lady Pendleton affected to laugh off the other’s rudeness: ‘what nonsense you talk—even if he is seen sometimes in the park with Laura; but as to Lady Helen, why, you know Harold Falcon has nothing—has been in debt all his life, and could not live in the country until his aunt died and left all her nephews and nieces twenty thousand pounds a-piece. I should like to see Lady Helen Falcon married upon six hundred a-year.’

‘Or dear Laura either, dear Lady Pendleton; but you know Lady Helen has forty thousand of

her own, and as Lord Hawkestone's life is scarcely worth three years' purchase—'

'You don't say so ;' and Lady Pendleton made up her mind that if Harold were to make an offer to Laura, it might be well to try how far a limited income could be made to go with so large a stake in prospect.

That is the way ladies with marriageable daughters talked about Lord Hawkestone and his cousin. There were plenty there who would have taken either of them, and risked the health of the one and the prospects of the other ; and the girls themselves, it is but fair to say, were even more disinterested.

When Hawkestone came from the continent the last time he had mentioned casually to Harold his having met with a pretty woman, half English, half German (he called her), with a handsome boy in whom he took an interest ; that is, as much interest as one generally takes in pretty women, with good-looking sons, whom one only sees once, and whom one is not likely to see again. Harold had not paid much attention to his cousin's account, and Hawkestone had never repeated it. Strange to say he had not even mentioned Jansen's name, although he had made a memorandum of it, and of the boy George Fellowes. It

was not unnatural that, having spoken of them once, he should never recur to them again. He never cared to talk of his foreign experiences ; and, unlike some persons, he gave everybody credit for knowing everything about it. This is a rare quality in a traveller ; for it is just that anxious wish to appear cleverer than other people that produces so many rivals to Baron Munchausen. English gentlemen are not naturally given to this, as their assumed indifference, if no more powerful motive does so, deters them from it ; but your travelled monkey of the upper middle—or what are called the respectable—classes of society is an intolerable bore, who offends all, some by his assumption, some by his rivalry.

During the summer months Lord Falconberg was always in town, though nothing was so irksome to him as the dust and heat. He hailed the villa at Egmont therefore as a perfect Godsend. Nothing could have been more opportune than Harold's offer, and when Lord Hawkestone and Harold were not disposed to leave town, or not in that direction, he and his daughter made a point of spending from Saturday till Monday at the bachelor's retreat. He became quite the lion of the place ; and notwithstanding the obtrusive greatness of the new squire, whom we saw at his

own introduction to Hawkestone and Harold at Richmond, there was something about a real earl which quite cut old Cripplegate out. Besides, he was not yet Sir Samuel. That honour was in abeyance, until it had been clearly ascertained which way old Cripplegate meant to vote in some city election not yet come off. The fact is, the alderman was shaky.

The earl was really worth looking at, independently of the Lady Helen. She took the curate's breath away the first Sunday she appeared. The rector, you remember, went with the rest of the aristocracy, so there was none. He (the earl, not the rector nor the curate) was a very fine gentlemanly-looking old man, who had aged very rapidly. It was a very grand sight to see him in the centre of the congregation, in an ordinary pew which belonged to the house, and which had been given as a sort of sop for the ten-pound note which old Lady Falcon, non-resident then as the rector now, had lent, long before the parish could have guessed what a rarity a real bit of blood would be. Handsome and aristocratic-looking as he was, nobody that saw him saying his prayers with true devotion, uncurtained and uncribbed, would believe that he was a positive lord with some thirty thousand a-year. Now 'the squire'

(I intend to ask for a definition of a squire before long) had the dignity of a large roomy pew with red curtains round it ; with a little chair for each of the children, which he had not ; and three fine arm-chairs, with large desks and enormous large-typed golden-bound prayer-books, out of which a man is bound (as well as his book) to pray like a nobleman. But the people would not look at him. Nobody took any notice of him when the earl and Lady Helen came to church. The Sunday-school children, who, I am obliged to confess, are a most discriminating race, cared no more for this vulgar old snob than if he were nobody, while they bobbed and curtesied at Lord Falconberg and Lady Helen without ceasing. They had no great encouragement, for it was not their parish, but they appeared not to be able to help it.

‘Helen, dear, give that little thing a shilling for me;’ and Lady Helen waited a moment while the rest of the children went by, questioning the blue-eyed little thing about something or other, and then shaking hands quietly, slipped a shilling into her hand, and walked quickly after her father.

‘My dear, here comes Flora Styles and the rest of ’em,’ says old Cripple-gate to his wife, on Sunday afternoon, at the bottom of the churchyard

‘Now, Flora, what was the text of our excellent pastor’s discourse?’—this in a loud voice. Flora becomes bright scarlet, hangs down her head and cries.

‘Now you, who are you? little girl, let’s hear the text.’

‘Please, sir, I’m Mrs Southcote’s daughter.’

‘Well, then, Mrs Southcote’s daughter,’—and here he and his wife and daughter, and all the other wives and daughters, laughed loudly,—‘what was the text of our excellent clergyman this afternoon?’

‘Please, sir,’ replied she, ‘Thou almost persuadedest me to be a Christian.’

‘That’s a good girl. Mrs Cripplegate, my dear, give Mrs Southcote’s daughter a shilling.’

‘Please, sir, I know’d ’un too,’ says Sally Lowndes. But Cripplegate was deaf to such a charmer; and pursued his way to his lodge-gate, having done the bountiful to a full audience. Not that he was a stingy man or grudged the shilling, but Cripplegate wasn’t a gentleman. These squires now-a-days seldom are.

Lord Falconberg had made up his mind that Lord Hawkestone was better; and when he saw him enjoying his usual amusements, it is not surprising that he was affected by the appearances

which deceived other people. Then, as was natural, he reverted again to the prospects of his son's marriage; and all its conveniences, if not its probabilities, struck him very forcibly. Lord Falconberg was by nature a shy man. Education and constant intercourse with the highest class of the aristocracy had negatived the disposition by the habit of saying what he thought, and, it must be admitted, of doing what he liked. He was thoroughly spoilt by his family. Yet he was conscious of some sort of superiority on the part of Lord Hawkestone, which prevented him from saying to him, what he thought he might say of him; nor could he see any impediment to Harold's urging that which he might so much better have done for himself. He did not understand that it ought to have been easier to him to have said, 'My boy, I think it's high time that you married somebody,' than to anybody else. Of course in his dilemma he went to Harold.

'Harold, are you going to Newmarket next week with Hawkestone?'

'I thought of doing so, unless you want me in town.'

'Doesn't it occur to you that his health is much better than it used to be? In fact, the danger we dreaded for so many years is pretty well over.'

‘I think he is much better. Whether all danger can be said to be over, so long as he carries about with him the seeds of such a disorder, I doubt. You know he is the least nervous man in the world about himself; but he still thinks it right to take every precaution.’

‘You were always a croaker, Harold.’

‘Not about myself, uncle. I confess I have been so about Hawkestone, but am much less so.’

‘Does it never occur to you that he is rather—well, I won’t say in love, but attentive to Lady Di—’

‘I think he likes her—’

‘Yes, so I thought.’

‘About as well as I do, or you do. It’s Hawkestone’s nature to be kind to women, and nobody could help it to Lady Di. No, uncle, I don’t think there’s much in that. I wish he’d marry her, or somebody like her,’ added he, rather fiercely; for he could not help recollecting his own position with regard to the title and estate, and thought the old lord was paying him a very disagreeable compliment in making him the marplot to his own fortunes. However, he was glad to believe that they saw his utter indifference to the prospect which Hawkestone’s celibacy opened to himself.



‘And so do I. Now, my dear Harold, do see what you can do to persuade him. Can’t you make him see how fond Lady Di is of him?’

‘But is she?’

‘Is she? Why, she’s madly in love with him: and as to the duke, I don’t think there’s anything in the world he’d like so much for his daughter.’

‘Possibly,’ said Harold, who felt the inconvenience of the conversation every minute. ‘Well, then, you persuade Hawkestone of that. Make him see that he ought to propose.’

‘But, my dear Lord Falconberg, I don’t think he ought.’

‘Well, then,’ said the old gentleman, entirely out of temper with Harold’s scruples, ‘why the d—l don’t you propose to her yourself?’

Harold laughed, even though there came over him a dark cloud, at the extreme determination of Lord Falconberg to marry somebody. Then he said, not very gravely, ‘Perhaps she wouldn’t accept me, with her very strong feelings in favour of Hawkestone.’

‘Possibly not, if you talked to her in the tone you talk to me. But just tell me what is to become of the title. Do you know that after you it goes to your cousin George?’

‘You distress yourself, Lord Falconberg, unnecessarily. Let us hope that Hawkestone may yet live many years, and perhaps marry. At all events we might get a grant from the crown to settle the title and estate on Helen’s heirs—’

‘Helen!’ said Lord Falconberg, for the first time seriously out of temper: ‘Lady Helen is the worst of you all. She’s refused Farina, and half the best matches in London. And as to consulting me, she’d as soon think of consulting the librarian of the British Museum: she’d much rather take the opinion of that Popish Ritualist, Carfax.’ Saying which, Lord Falconberg walked out of the room, leaving Harold Falcon to make the best of his uncle’s peculiar disposition for match-making.

## CHAPTER V.

## AFTER THE SEASON IN SCOTLAND.

ONE more summer was drawing to a close. It had been warm and dry, and by no means formed the basis of three hot days and a thunder-storm, according to foreign notions of our climate. It had been unusually lengthened; and even now in September the days were hot until the sun went down, when some care was requisite with persons affected as Lord Hawkestone had been; though he seemed to think less of his ailments day by day.

Most of the world, that world which consists of men of wealth and position, the swells, or, as the snobs call them with a tenfold vulgarity, the Upper Ten Thousand, had long left town. The ministers and their supporters, careless of the futility of their past labours, and viewing with indifference their constituents through the diminishing end of the telescope, were amusing themselves in Scotland, Ireland, Norway, the

German baths, or on the waters of the Mediterranean. Their opponents, whose bitterest invectives and most amusingly-devised satire had been lately hurled against them, were now with them, enjoying the notion that the people whom they had left in the lurch on the various questions submitted to their consideration, were just as well off without their settlement, and could afford to wait for extension of the franchise, or the abolition of a tax, until it was nearly time to use the one or pay the other. Both sides were equally honest in one respect. They had both ceased to make a capital of their sincerity of purpose, until the same commodity should be called into requisition by equal emergencies. 'Talk not to me, sir, of political integrity,' said my old friend, Sir Digbury Cheek; 'rather tell me of the honesty of the turf;' a tremendous facer for both these respectable parties, and coming from a man who divided the whole of his time pretty evenly between them.

Now, could Sir Digbury see nothing but evil in his own occupations, or was he fain to occupy himself in them only with the view to setting an example of virtue to a degenerate age?

Lord Falconberg was gone to Scotland, to his place in Aberdeenshire. He had taken with

him Lord Hawkestone and Harold, who had organized a strong force against the grouse, which were said to be strong and plentiful. Trevelyan, who was flourishing upon the ruins of an estate which no nursing could possibly put right, was going down; and Beauchamp, whose estate had been growing beneath his fostering hand, while the other was decreasing. Lady Helen was gone to spend a month at the duke's at Silverthorn. There were half-a-dozen more expected at different times, between the twelfth of August and the end of September, when the Falconberg party was to break up for the winter.

Gorham Lodge was small, having been used chiefly as a shooting-lodge, and nothing more. It had been enlarged to admit of the late Lady Falconberg accompanying her husband. He had been great on the moors as a young man, and was not sorry to have so agreeable a companion after the turmoil of a London season, in which the best of married people see but little of one another. It had accommodation enough for bachelors, but the married couples were obliged to be limited in number, and indifferent to the extent of Windsor Castle comforts.

There was plenty of shooting for everybody. The drag, or rather the omnibus, with four well-

bred little horses, took men, dogs, luncheon, guns, and ammunition to the foot of the moors, when it was requisite to begin some distance from home. Harold Falcon stood with the reins in his hand—

‘Now then, are you fellows nearly ready—all the guns inside? Where’s Hawkestone? Who’s coming up with me? Here, Chesterton, come up here. I know Hawkestone likes sitting behind.’ And within a minute the whole party are on their way to the moors.

‘Where do we begin, Scott?’ inquired Harold Falcon of one of the keepers on the roof of the omnibus, as they neared the place in the fresh morning air.

‘Birnside moor, sir,’ says the man. ‘My lord will beat the lower ground, and meet ye at lunch, close by the old pit where you and Lord Hawkestone killed so many birds last year. It’s easy walking; and if my lord begins about eleven o’clock, and beats slowly on, he’ll be on the lower hillie before ye’ve done wi’ Birnside.’ And in a very short time Harold pulls up, and they all get down from or out of the omnibus.

‘I presume a day’s grouse shooting has been described somewhere or other before this. The ‘Sporting Magazine,’ or ‘Baily,’ or ‘Bell’s Life,’ or the ‘Field,’ must have devoted a few pages to

tell how the thing is managed. If not, I regret that it is out of all reason to delay the reader of a two-volumed novel for that purpose. It may suffice to say that we divided our forces; two were sent over the hill, two more beat the top of it, and those unambitious of climbing, were allowed to walk through the heavy-tangled heather at the bottom. We give that to Lord Hawkestone and his old friend Barrington, who like to saunter along steadily, smoking and chatting. Then there stands one of the setters, old Bang, half-way up the hill, and the keeper so-hos him, while the guns approach—but the birds have run; and by the time Hawkestone and his friend have reached the spot, Bang is off, and, taking one swing round to head the birds, comes to a dead point right down below, at least four hundred yards from his master.

‘Now, Barrington, it’s all right; they’re there, and Bang will never move;’ in consideration of which the noble lord proceeds to slip and slide at his leisure down the side of a house, rendered rather worse by the slippery nature of the thatch, until, reaching the dogs, the birds rise slowly and noiselessly; and out of twelve that rise, four will rise no more.

A long way off to the right, the distant re-

port of Harold's gun, with that of his friend Beauchamp's, is heard at no long intervals; and there is but little reason to doubt with what effect, even before the show at luncheon settles that question. 'And here comes my father,' says Lord Hawkestone, as they all greet the aristocratic old peer, whose bag still makes a handsome addition to the seventy or eighty brace which have fallen to the other guns.

Then comes an hour of cheerful rest, and a pipe or cigar after the luncheon, until an enthusiastic youngster suggests that it's nearly time to beat the other side of the hill; and so it is. And when the drag once more is brought to meet them at the end of their beat, they are glad to put on their pea-jackets, and climb up or in with something less of alacrity than they turned out in the morning.

'How are you, Hawkestone?' says Chesterton, who had not been with him.

'Never felt better in my life.' 'Pon my word, Scotland's far better for me than Naples. Old Lobel's an ass.'

'I've no doubt it would be, old fellow, if it was August here all the year round. We'll try the pool to-morrow, below the bridge, I vote;'



and by that time they were all at home again, and ready for dinner.

‘Would anybody like to go down and try for a salmon?’ inquired Lord Hawkestone, looking up at a gloomy sky, after luncheon, some of the party only being on the moors. ‘Where’s Mr Beauchamp? he was in an hour or two ago.’

‘He’s gone with Lord Chesterton to try and get a roebuck, my lord. One was seen this morning over the low walls, not ten yards from the road, but Mr Beauchamp had no gun with him.’

‘Harold,’ said Lord Hawkestone, turning back along a passage towards the gun-room, where he thought it not impossible his cousin might be, at the same moment throwing open the door. ‘Ah! there you are. Never mind about the guns; come down and try for a salmon.’

Now I know nothing so disappointing as going down to try for a salmon. They never will run when you want them. I remember waiting ten days in Scotland, prepared, above all grouse-shooting, deer-stalking, or anything else, to kill a salmon. I never even saw one. They tried hard to persuade me that I did, at the bottom of a deep hole, from which he was not to be moved. I

don't think I did see him; and I remember that during the whole of that time only one salmon was taken, and that by the most cunning and unscrupulous of poachers.

Harold Falcon was of my way of thinking, and declined; 'but,' said he, 'I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll get a gun, and shoot some rabbits down the river, and pick you up below the bridge on my way back.' So they started. The park was lovely; and as every now and then a gleam of sunshine threw its light across the long avenue which led up to the house, the shadows of the huge beech trees waved to and fro. The deer started from the heather and ferns in which they were lying, and the rabbits ran quickly into the long grass, as the two men came heedlessly on. Half a mile off was a keeper's lodge, near the old stone bridge below the waterfall; and further on, towards the lodge-gate of the park, ran the broad and rapid river on which old Gorham Keep had been built. There remained of it part of the old tower, covered with ivy; and from the top of it, to which the visitor or wanderer clambered at the risk of his neck, might be seen a view which almost repaid the adventurer for his risk, unless he were more valuable than most of them are. 'See Gorham

and die' ought certainly to have been the traveller's motto, in search of the picturesque. Having found it, there was yet another prospect, that of coming to grief afterwards. The two men walked on, Hawkestone with his hands in his pockets, for the rods and lines were at the keeper's lodge; Harold with his gun over his shoulder, and two or three dozen cartridges in his pouch.

'You seem better this year than usual, Hawkestone.'

'So well that I shall stay in England again this winter. I sent the two horses I bought last week down to Hawkestone, to be put in condition. With the four I have there, I shall be strong enough for as much hunting as Lobel will allow.'

'I don't think you care much about your continental life?'

'I never did. By-the-way, if I had gone back this year I meant to have called at Cleves on my road.'

'Why at Cleves?'

'You forget what I told you two years ago—about the boy I met there, with the handsome mother and gigantic grandfather.'

'You told me about some handsome lad, whom you meant to make a painter of, but you left out Cleves; and though I recollect something of the

proportions of the grandfather, the beauty of the mother you kept all to yourself.'

'Did I?' Well, they were features in the adventure, of course. The beauty of the woman was very great—the sort of beauty one rarely sees in either country, a mixture of the best parts of both.'

Here they reached the bridge, over which they both leant, the thoughts of either wandering away from the scene, and dwelling on something very foreign to rabbit-shooting or salmon-fishing in Scotland.

'Hawkestone, my dear fellow, why don't you think of marrying?'

'Why don't you?' asked the other, rousing himself, and laughing.

'Because I've nothing to marry upon.'

'How mercenary you must think women. I daresay they are in a general way, but you ought not to think so.'

'I don't understand you, my dear Hawkestone. As to you—you ought to marry. You've a position to support a wife, and a name to hand down to posterity.'

'Then I see how it is. Lord Falconberg has been talking to you.'

'It's a pity he doesn't talk to you.'

‘ So he does, Harold ; but its always about you.’

Harold looked once more gloomily into the waters below the bridge, and nodding to his cousin, pursued his walk among the rough stones and boulders that formed a bank of the river. Hawkestone got out a keeper, a good salmon-rod, some flies, a landing-net, and a pair of fishing-boots, and then walked on to some stones which stood half-way across the stream.

## CHAPTER VI.

## A STRANGER.

HAROLD had been shooting with tolerable success for about a couple of hours, and was thinking of returning by a different route, to see how his cousin was getting on. He had been absorbed in his sport; for he was compelled to keep a sharp look-out, as the rabbits ran from underneath the rocks and boulders towards their holes, as he startled them from their retreats. As he made a snap shot every now and then, they would roll over, and, after one or two vain efforts to retain their footing, the wild little conies would fall into the river, whence old Port would leisurely retrieve them.

He had reached the bridge, which he was about to cross, and which here spanned the stream in even a more picturesque manner than the one at which we left Lord Hawkestone, when a rabbit jumped out from under a huge stone on the river's bank, and scampered off to the right among the

rocks and shrubs which here fringed it. Harold put up his gun, and was about to pull the trigger, when he caught sight of a black hat and, coat reclining against a stone almost in a line with his gun. He walked down to the object, and to his surprise, saw a stranger fast asleep. He had plenty of time to scrutinize his face and dress, and to guess at his occupation.

The stranger was very young, not more than seventeen or eighteen years of age. He was very good-looking, fair and light-haired; but as his eyes were closed, their colour remained unknown. His dress was, in those days, sufficiently remarkable, and seems to have stolen a march on that of our own. It was of black velveteen, and the breeches were the same as our knickerbockers. The collars of his neck were thrown back from his throat, and were tied with a piece of pale blue silk, and fastened by a ring.

‘Conceited young ass!’ thought Harold, ‘and yet what a good simple-looking face it is; and what’s this—ah! I see—a painter. What an extraordinary thing it is, that a man can’t have a taste for art without making a fool of himself in one way or another. Capital sketch too; how well the old Keep comes in,’ continued he to himself, looking still at the sketch. ‘I suppose if he were two

years older he'd have had a beard and moustache,' at which point in Harold's deliberations the conceited young ass sat up.

'I beg your pardon,' said Harold, returning the block (for the sketch was made on a block in water-colours), and then hesitating instead of asking him, as he intended to have done, what he had come there for. Having the sketch still in his hand it was unnecessary. There was something in the young man's attitude and appearance too, now that he stood up, that made it difficult. So he said at length, returning him the sketch,

'I need scarcely ask you why you were here. You have chosen a lovely subject. It's the best view of the old Castle in the neighbourhood.'

'I'm glad you like the sketch. I was afraid I might have been trespassing, for I'm a stranger.' Here he raised a slouched felt hat which he wore.

'An artist! We are accustomed to see them frequently here from London.'

'I am from Germany,' said the lad.

'And you were told of the beauties of Scotland, as fitter for your pencil—'

'Not altogether; I had a letter to deliver to an English nobleman, and I found that he had left London for Scotland. So it was necessary for me to come.' All this time Harold Falcon



had been amused as well as surprised by the peculiarity with which the stranger spoke English. It was entirely without error, and without accent, but with a sort of formality or pedantry, quite uncommon among our own countrymen, and with an ease quite unattainable by a foreigner.

‘Then having delivered your credentials elsewhere, you are now taking a tour professionally about the country? If you don’t mind coming with me I can show you an equally beautiful view of the Castle and river, and a place where you can sketch without the risk of being shot,’ and then Harold told him of his narrow escape. From this time till they came within sight of the bridge and the keeper’s lodge, they talked of indifferent matters—sunsets—Walter Scott—Rhenish salmon and Rhenish wine.

‘Will you tell me the name of this place?’ said the stranger, taking up his sketch-book and his small box of colours, which had been lying by him when Harold Falcon had surprised him.

‘This is Gorham Keep; and the house, which is what we call a shooting box or lodge in this country, belongs to Lord Falconberg.’

‘Lord Falconberg,’ repeated the young stranger to himself, and was then silent. At the same moment Scott, one of the keepers, passed, carry-

ing some fishing-tackle on his shoulders. He touched his hat, and Harold asked him whether they had had any sport.

‘My lord hooked a good fish, and had to follow him, he got into some deep water below the flats, and got over the side of the giant’s rock; he broke the tackle, and my lord was obliged to give him up, sir.

‘And where is Lord Hawkestone? He’s so imprudent, Scott.’

‘Yes, sir. It’s not much use if he gets hold of a salmon. He hooked him above the bridge, and away he goes, after making one splash, down stream.’ Scott was quite excited by the recollection, and the man of art stood staring with wonder while he proceeded. ‘At first my lord couldn’t get along, the bank’s so bad, and his line was nearly run out. He stopped a bit in the deep hole just above the bridge, and my lord wound up a yard or two of line, but he made a dart a minute after and went right underneath the arch nearest this side. My lord wouldn’t let him go, and when his line was out he followed him again right through the arch, up to his neck in water—it was just below there, when he got on to the bank again, that he got over the giant’s rock and cut the tackle. Ay, it war’ a cannie

fish,' and Scott was sorry for the loss of his fish, though he was obliged to admit after some consideration—Ech, sirs, it's lucky the line broke, or I doubt he'd a bin there till midnight;' saying which Scott went on his way and Harold on his.

'I thought you said this was Lord Falconberg's?'

'So I did,' replied Harold looking round.

'Then who's Lord Hawkestone? I thought you mentioned him just now.'

'He's Lord Falconberg's son, and I am his cousin.'

'It's Lord Hawkestone that I came here to see.'

'Then you shall see him to-morrow. But for his having got wet through you would have seen him now. And there's the bridge and the sketch of the ruins, which I promised to show you. Shall I tell Lord Hawkestone that you want to see him?'

'Thank you, I have no card,' said the young man. 'He will scarcely know who I am; but if you say that my name is Fellowes, and that I have come over from Germany. Stay, I have the letter with me, I believe,' upon which the young man produced from a side pocket of his sketch-book a letter addressed to Lord Hawkestone, in Gros-

venor-square ; and giving it to Harold with many thanks for his civility, and taking off his hat, as is the manner of his countrymen, turned to the survey of the landscape which Harold had recommended to his notice.

When Harold Falcon got to the lodge he found that Lord Hawkestone was gone to his room, and that the party were already come in from the moors ; so he gave the letter he had received to his cousin's valet, and went to his own room to dress for dinner.

He was about finishing his toilette when Hawkestone came to him.

‘Harold, the most extraordinary thing has happened!’

‘Not very extraordinary, old fellow. I’ve known you lose a fish before to-day, when you ought to have killed him, and get wet through when you ought to have kept dry.’

‘Weren’t we talking about a German *protégé* of mine, whom I meant to see this year at Cleves if I went abroad after the October meeting?’

‘We were,’ and a light began to dawn upon Harold, but it was only a sort of twilight after all.

‘What do you think?—he’s here—the boy has arrived, and the letter you gave to Wrench

was brought by him from his grandfather. Where did you get it?’

‘The youngster himself gave it me; he’s an intelligent young fellow, and had made the most charming sketch of the river and Keep from the lower bridge. Strange to say I brought him up to look for you salmon-fishing, and then he told me he was come in search of Lord Hawkestone.’

‘Look here, Harold—you can do me a favour, and save me trouble.’

‘What is it?’

‘I’m going stalking to-morrow at Ballater. Long Range has the forest; and as to fishing and grouse, one gets tired of the thing. Now this youngster, George Fellowes he calls himself,—where had Harold heard that name before?—‘is really come to England to work; he can’t afford to live without it, and I certainly promised him my patronage as far as that goes. Will you see him for me, and say I shall be away for a few days. If he wants to go back to town, I suppose I shan’t be able to do anything for him till I go through. How unfortunate. I must be off early too, or I might have been able to do something for him.’

‘Oh, don’t distress yourself—I’ll do all I can in the matter.’

‘Thanks, Harold. Whatever you arrange for the present will satisfy me. I don’t know yet whether he is to study high art or law. I suppose I must send him to work with old Madder, or ask Dryden’s advice.’ And as the dinner-bell rang at that moment, both Hawkestone and Harold ran down-stairs.

Harold Falcon fulfilled scrupulously his promise to his cousin. It was not difficult. Mr Fellowes stated candidly and explicitly his views. His first object was a profession—if possible, as a painter ; if not, as anything that would enable him to live in town. Henceforth he was to be an Englishman. He had also a definite object, unrevealed, for which he was to live in London or its immediate vicinity. ‘Could Mr Falcon assist him in any way in the promotion of these objects?’ Well, it was not easy to do ; and Harold wished Hawkestone had waited to receive his own *protégé*. Yes, there was one thing he could do. Money Harold had always found to be the great stumbling-block in his life. He couldn’t give it without hurting the man’s feelings ; but he might save it. Would Mr Fellowes go to Egmont, and make his house his home till Lord Hawkestone or he came to town. He had no other advice to give, and in the long-run it was

accepted. At all events the old housekeeper would find him what he wanted, and it was something to have escaped the mercies of a London lodging-house keeper.

## CHAPTER VII.

## A CHANGE OF QUARTERS.

LONG RANGE had Ballata, and the deer forest attached to it; and he had into the bargain a capital house, a substantial stone house, filled from top to bottom with a most cheerful set of people. 'Youth at the helm, and Pleasure at the prow,' the ship went gaily through the waters. Youth, in fact, managed to steer exactly where it liked; and at the present time, after running through the moors one day and the forest the next, it shot right ahead at night into the small hours of the morning—short whist and grilled bones. This is not the way to shoot, so as to hit anything; but it was an adjunct to the general sport quite in accordance with its followers. Early hours are only symbols of youthful years. It may be true that 'youth is a blunder, manhood a strength, old age a regret.' I forget who says so. I daresay he is right. Manhood is a struggle to get out of the

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blunders which youth has committed, and old age is a regret that manhood can't do so. I like youth,—I like blunders, especially when they include grouse-shooting, deer-stalking, and a rubber, not too high, but as late as you please.

Mrs Long Range was a charming person, and her house in Scotland one of the pleasantest possible to go to. In London women will say ill-natured things, and they pretended that she was not in the best set because she had not been always quite as well behaved as she should have been. I know she was all right in Scotland: and it seems to me to be a very poor compliment to the Presbyterian ladies, to say that some people don't care where they go in Scotland as long as they are allowed to pick and choose in Belgravia. Be that as it may, there was no harm in Mrs Long Range now, and she had a very respectable set of people staying with her.

At one o'clock in the morning of a fine and successful day's shooting in the beginning of September, when the grouse are really worth killing, and before which your real professor professes to despise the art which brings them to bag, there sat round a comfortable card-table four young gentlemen, on whom time had made no sort of mark, and with whom fatigue seemed to have

been equally lenient. Four, did I say? no, three. To say that the fourth was the youngest of the party, would have been to put him in his second childhood: a rank libel. But he was upwards of seventy, fresh, hale, hearty: had been shooting all day; and was just now concluding a rubber and a cigar, previous to retirement for the night.

Sir Jacob Hardiman was one of the very cheeriest, most jovial, and most uncompromising of her Majesty's Dust-collecting Commissioners.

'What! the ten of diamonds,' exclaimed the old gentleman, reddening up as he resigned the lost trick. 'Why, Armitage, what the devil have you been about! You played a small one second hand, and let Spalding's nine make, when there were but three in, and you held two of them. Good heavens! my dear fellow, you sacrificed my ace of trumps, and lost us the game.'

Armitage woke up. 'What's the matter? Oh, no,—did I, though? 'pon my soul, Sir Jacob, I'm deuced sorry—but I thought—'

'Oh! it's no use to think at whist; you ought to—' here the door opened, and a laughing, noisy crew, who had been smoking elsewhere, broke in upon the quiet of the rubber.

'Hallo,' said the crew, 'Armitage again. He's always doing it, Sir Jacob. Quite unfit to

live with young fellows like you. Armitage, you'd better go to bed.'

'Well, I suppose there's no more whist, so I will. I've been asleep the last hour : here, I owe thirty-two and sixpence to somebody,' and depositing it upon the card-table Armitage went to bed, nothing loth.

'Spalding the keeper's been here to-night, and says the big hart has been tracked : I said we couldn't go to-morrow, but that we'd start early the morning after, and be at the shealing by day-break. Hawkestone's coming to-morrow, and he'll enjoy it. He's one of the best stalkers in this country.'

'Did the keeper say that? Who heard him?'

'I did,' says Lord Pall Mall.

'That's nothing—you couldn't understand him if you did.'

'But Long Range heard him too.'

'That's another matter. A man's bound to understand his own servants, as much as they're bound to obey him. I believe Long Range has an inkling of what's meant when McRothery tells him anything ; but I defy any one else in the house to be within any reach of it.'

'He told me all about the big hart the day before yesterday ; but as I didn't know exactly

what he meant I held my tongue about it. Bore to live in the country when one don't know the language.'

'Well! Long Range wants Hawkestone to have a chance at the big hart, and you fellows are to arrange who will go with him. He's just as likely to take three days' stalking as one; but you may get other deer looking for him,' said Leicester—a very handsome man and a colonel of the Guards.

'All right. We'll settle to-morrow, Colonel; now for one glass of soda and brandy, and I'm for bed,' said Spalding, lieutenant and captain of the same regiment. Colonel Leicester laughed. 'When I was a youngster we didn't look at soda-water, and as to brandy, we regarded it as the strong drink of revolutionary principles. Claret was the drink for the London season, and port for the Shires. It's brandy and soda that kills so many of you.' With which advice the Colonel took his candle and went to bed.

'I say, Spalding, is the "big hart" the thing McRothery calls the muckle something or other of Ben something else?' inquired Pall Mall.

'Yes: and if half he says of him is true he must be the devil. I'm sure he thinks so—he describes him as big as a young elephant, as wild

as an eagle, and as savage as a Saturday Reviewer. There's a mystery attached to the beast in his mind, which renders him quite incapable of being brought down except by the ball of what he's pleased to call a "deeing mon."

'He's a pleasant, cheerful companion to persuade us all to go in pursuit of him.'

'Oh, his idea is not that we're going to die, but that we shall not any of us get within a mile of him. I know Hawkestone will try, and I for one should be glad to go with him.'

And the next day Lord Hawkestone arrived in time for dinner.

I daresay some of my readers, especially those who are sportsmen, would like to know something about the big hart, or the muckle hart, of Ben Falloch. In truth, he was a magnificent beast, according to the accounts of those who had seen him, and they were not few. Several attempts had been made to get near him, but whether his senses bore a proportion to his size, or luck had favoured him, I cannot say: he had scarcely ever been within shot. Twice, indeed, Mr McRothery himself had missed him, or had done him no material injury, which was quite enough for that gentleman to build up a superstition of a somewhat German character. From the

pace at which the muckle hart had gone off, however, he seemed to trust quite as much to his own strength and activity as to the devil, who sooner or later (most likely sooner) would have betrayed him. The keeper too administered some consolation to himself. One of two cases was applicable. He was himself not a 'deeing mon,' and it was no disgrace to him to be foiled by the enemy of mankind.

Long Range took a totally different view of the matter, perhaps a truer and more sensible one. Whenever he had gone after this identical stag—and he had a great anxiety to get him—he had been foiled by untoward accidents: the wind was wrong: once a sudden fog had come on, and Long Range had nearly had to sleep in a turf hut or shealing with his keeper: an old cock grouse had spoilt his sport another time, by startling the stag when nearly within range: and once he had palpably missed him from over-anxiety. There was no doubt about his being a very fine stag; and seen by the side of others, as he had been, he appeared almost gigantic. It seemed a regular Herculean labour to get hold of this brazen-faced gentleman, who showed them a clean pair of heels just when it would have been convenient that he should have waited. He had a glorious

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mane, and a most royal head, to which belonged the quickest eyes and the acutest scent in the forest. As Long Range observed to Mrs Long Range, 'My dear, these are all very good at grouse, and at dinner, and I don't think we could have got a pleasanter party into the house; but as to stalking such a deer as that, Florence Dimple might as well try to stalk Lord Farina, and you know how much chance there'd be of that coming off. I'll get Hawkestone over here, and then we shall have a chance.'

When Lord Hawkestone turned out of bed it was rather earlier than he was accustomed to; but he was bitten with an anxiety to see this mysterious beast. His host, Captain Spalding, McRothery, an active gillie, and a couple of magnificent deer-hounds, were awaiting him in front of the house. It was not long before they were on their journey.

On reaching the spot where their sport was to begin, they descended from the carriage, dismissed it by a circuitous route to the other side of the forest, and commenced operations.

Lord Hawkestone and Captain Spalding were placed under charge of McRothery, Mr Long Range and the gillie went together; each party taking one hound.



## CHAPTER VIII.

HOW LORD HAWKESTONE KILLED THE BIG HART OF  
BEN FALLOCH.

THE country had nothing very remarkable in its features beyond that which every one who has been in it must have seen. There was stretched to a vast distance in the foreground, not exactly a table-land, but a gently ascending space of rugged ground, interspersed with huge blocks of granite, broken ascents, black moorland, and coarse tufted grass in great abundance. All the lower part of this was bog, easily passable by man or cattle which used certain tracks, but not easily passable by a stranger, excepting with the greatest care. This long and wearisome ascent rose gradually from the morasses on the left towards the right; and as it spread higher and higher, it assumed a greater degree of rugged beauty and grandeur, until it lost itself among magnificent forests of pine and firs. From the centre of the forest stood out huge rocks, utterly bare to all



appearance, in whose angular clefts the snow still lingered in places. It was here the sportsman sought the ptarmigan, after having passed the previous night at one of the lodges or huts to be met with in the lower and more sheltered parts of the forest. Three sides of this enormous extent of rugged, broken ground was occupied by thick trees, of the genus pine. Here and there, scattered over the undulations, and at the foot of the boulders, or even in their clefts, might be seen the graceful birches, united with hardy shrubs and other common trees.

Two remarkable features in the landscape require to be noticed. The first of these was the rough and stony road or path, which would scarcely admit a mule, but which formed the track across the moorland into the depths of the real forest (for it all goes under that name), and beyond it. It was deep and most difficult to travel, being slippery with heather, and encumbered with loose pointed stones. It looked like the dried-up bed of a furious torrent ; so that to say that *the road* in question was built up by a natural wall of stones on each side, is to pay it a most unmerited compliment.

The second of these features was a burn, or rather mountain-torrent, on the right-hand side

of the so-called road, coming from the hills of the forest, now leaping, now trickling down among the boulders, until it crossed the road, and found its way through the bog beyond, serving for the purposes to which the inhabitants of the hamlet below had been taught to put water when it came in their way.

Now both of these features were serviceable for stalking, should the stags be, as they not unfrequently were, feeding or lying down in apparent security on this moorland ; and having the shelter of the forest and the fastnesses beyond to fly to, should they be unexpectedly disturbed, of which they trusted to their senses of hearing or of smell to give them timely notice. There were three or four deep and narrow glens, through which they were accustomed to get to their shelter, and one of which Mr Long Range and his gillie were now occupying, in the hope of cutting off the big hart, should he be disturbed anywhere on the open part of the forest.

The first hour's walking was tolerably easy, but was done in silence, and with due circumspection. Stags occasionally had been seen on the lower side of the hill. The wind blew cross-ways from the upper part of the valley. Nothing rewarded the first hour or two's exertions. Some

hinds were seen, and Lord Hawkestone stopped and used his glass, but nothing was seen worth further consideration. As they advanced the stalking became harder. They passed through a dark gully, overhung with birch and other trees. The stones were loose and large, and McRothery was mysterious above measure. The two sportsmen proceeded with much greater difficulty, as the road had become exceedingly steep at this spot. A halt was called, and Lord Hawkestone suggested whisky and some biscuits, which they had brought with them. This was within a quarter of a mile of the end of the ravine through which they were passing.

McRothery went first, and now proceeded with a degree of caution he had not yet used. In five minutes more they emerged from their enclosure, and a dead halt on the part of their leader necessitated the same from his followers. He didn't speak; he looked back, lying on his chest, and placed his finger on his lip. Lord Hawkestone crawled forward without speaking. Within a hundred yards of the stalkers, and on the left-hand side, consequently a little down-hill, stood a fine stag; not, however, the muckle hart of Ben Falloch. He had been feeding, but something had startled him. Lord Hawkestone beck-

oned to Spalding. As the latter raised himself but one inch too high, the stag started, luckily broadside on ; and as Captain Spalding fired, he fell. He rose again, and staggered down the hill ; but the dog and keeper were in pursuit, and in a few minutes all was over. But it was not the big hart.

Of course the attention of Lord Hawkestone was attracted to that side on which the stag had appeared ; but having secured their prey, both men rose simultaneously. At that moment Hawkestone turned his head to the wind, and saw, at a very long distance off, what he plainly perceived to be a very fine head. He called McRothery to his assistance, who, without the aid of his glass, proclaimed it at once to be the identical stag of which they were in search.

Their plans were soon formed. It was clear that the hart had been disturbed by the shot, though, with the disadvantage of the wind, he had not clearly made out what might be the cause.

‘Noo, Laird,’ (as he called all English noblemen,) ‘ye’ll get him this night, though it’s no sae easy as it looks.’ He then pointed out a glen by which he would try to enter the forest at the farthest side. Then said Lord Hawkestone,

‘The bed of the burn must be the place. It is not more than two hundred yards from the trees, by the look of it. Move higher up towards the other pass; and when I can get round, if he isn’t off at once, I’ll strike the burn, and take my chance of a shot one side or the other.’

It succeeded admirably. For the big hart, somewhat re-assured by hearing nothing more, and seeing nothing at all, began to feed, walking but leisurely towards the forest, and manifestly taking the burn in his way.

It was not difficult to get round to the burn higher up. The stones and trees were so many, and the inequalities of the ground, and the grass, so numerous, that sometimes walking erect from boulder to boulder, and then creeping from tuft to tuft, Lord Hawkestone struck the burn, when the sun was still high in heaven. His companions had had easier walking of it, and made their way to the proposed point, walking upright, and having, in the road and forest, no especial need of caution. By this means they got right round the stag, and when scented by him, were likely to drive him back to his own ground. The grand point was not to alarm him.

Nor was he alarmed. He continued his walk and his feed, just as calmly as an old Meltonian

continues his sherry and his ride together : and it was clear, too, that he meant crossing the burn.

In two bounds he jumped in and out, and in the same moment Lord Hawkestone struck it, and began his more careful investigation.

He had seldom lost sight of the stag, only when he slid behind a stone, or a group of trees, or when for a moment the ground frustrated his efforts. At the moment I speak of Hawkestone was within three hundred yards of him, but he could not see ; and when he got opposite to him, speering over the rocky banks of the burn, he enjoyed such a thrill of delight as few but sportsmen ever do enjoy.

The stag was feeding quietly, still continuing his walk towards the trees, where he would be met by McRothery and Captain Spalding. He was about one hundred yards from the place whence Lord Hawkestone was surveying him, and it was necessary to proceed with the greatest caution. It was far the finest stag that had been seen. Certainly never had Hawkestone seen his equal. He stood, however, with his haunches towards his enemy, and the position made it impossible to shoot with effect as he now was. Patience, the virtue we all put in practice when

no other virtue or vice will avail, came to the sportsman's aid now. Lord Hawkestone waited, keeping his eye still upon the magnificent beast.

To his astonishment, in a few minutes, the stag ceased grazing, and looked steadily forward ; the mouthful of grass he had torn up remaining unchewed, and his fine eyes standing almost out of his head. Strange to say he showed undaunted courage ; and with his head erect, advanced a step or two, and then stopped again. The wind, as I said, came down from that corner, and he must have been assured by it of mischief ; for without any hesitation he turned quickly round, and made his way at a stately walk towards the burn. Lord Hawkestone saw that he could wait no longer, as the alarm of the stag would probably increase rather than diminish. He raised himself quietly, and aiming over the bank of the burn, immediately behind the shoulder, fired. The effect was instantaneous. The stag fell forward, but struggled with great difficulty towards the water, into which he appeared to roll heavily.

Lord Hawkestone walked as rapidly down the burn as he could, elated with his victory. Yes, there, within a hundred yards of him, lay the big hart of Ben Falloch. His head was lying upon a large stone, his limbs immersed in the water



red with the blood; his mane floated in it, and his enormous antlers were supported by the bank of the burn. Lord Hawkestone approached him carelessly, confident of his full success. He stood by him, alternately watching him, and looking at the figures of McRothery and his companion, barely visible in the distance. They had started to walk across the hill when they had seen the smoke of the rifle and were assured of its success.

Lord Hawkestone laid aside his rifle, and stood listlessly by for some minutes, then he took hold of the antlers, with an idea of moving the head. In a moment, without the slightest notice, the bloodshot eyes opened, the stag appeared at once to recover a consciousness that he was in the presence of his victor. The quivering limbs became instinct with life, and the mane, dripping with gore, stood erect. Lord Hawkestone, without letting go the antlers, unconsciously resisted; when the stag, with a violent effort, freed himself, and with one dying bound threw himself upon him. They fell struggling against the granite stones of the bank, Hawkestone undermost, where he was compelled to lie, till McRothery came up, up to his middle in water, and almost unconscious from the pain of bruises



and a broken collar-bone. The weight of the beast prevented Lord Hawkestone from freeing himself, and he was unable to get to his flask. The timely arrival of his late companions with some difficulty released him.

So absorbed were the three by the success of their morning expedition, that no sooner was the unfortunate man restored to consciousness than they began to arrange for the cleaning and transport of the stag. It was not till they had settled the question of the dead beast, that they seriously considered that of the living man. Hawkestone was wet through, bruised, and with a broken bone ; and having tied up the left arm, and drank as much whisky as he could, but not half enough to satisfy McRothery, he started to find Long Range, the carriage, the farm-house, and a doctor, by the shortest possible road, some five miles of rough walking.

‘I’ll tell you what, Spalding,’ said his lordship, ‘it’s lucky Falcon isn’t here, or I should catch it. He’d prophesy nothing short of death for me ;’ and in truth Lord Hawkestone looked white enough for anything, notwithstanding his courage. After a time he said,

‘If you’ll go on to the farm, I’ll sit here ; and smoke a cigar,’ added he, after a moment’s pause,

to give confidence to his friend,—‘they can get the carriage as far as this, I should think.’

‘You’d better walk on, Hawkestone—you’re half wet through.’ So he did walk on, and at length the party came together. Long Range had killed a stag; but it was a bad finish to a good day.

Of course a doctor came off in a great hurry: when he had heard it was a nobleman who required his services he put on a speed. Doctors are not unlike the rest of the world in that respect; but they are a great deal better in many other respects, and much worse paid. He couldn’t do anything, and he honestly said so. The swelling and soreness was very great; he’d come again to-morrow; and in the mean time he had brought a little saline medicine, and requested that Lord Hawkestone should be kept quiet—Mr Wrench might apply as much hot water to the bruises and collar-bone as he pleased; it would ease the stiffness and soreness, and give a better opportunity for further operations on the morrow.

But this morrow was not productive of satisfactory results. The collar-bone was reduced, as far as collar-bones can be—my own experience is somewhat great in breakages—but the patient

was suffering from cold and slight fever. A cough in the case of Lord Hawkestone was a very bad symptom : which Mr Wrench or somebody ought to have told Mr Fitz-druggett, being quite sure that his lordship would say nothing at all about it.

There were several morrows after this which were not much better, during which Mrs Long Range did all in her power to relieve the pain and monotony of her guest, and the men who were not occupied with salmon, grouse, or deer, spent as much time as was good for their patient or pleasant to themselves in the sick man's room. The boisterous spirits never forgot that he was to be kept very quiet, so they didn't go often to see him.

About the fourth or fifth morning it became evident, upon the principle that a peer's life is as valuable to himself as a peasant's (only we used to read it the other way), that something more should be done. Doctor Fitz-druggett was not up to his work. At least, without saying so, he was not averse to another opinion (he felt that it was sure to be his own, which neutralized active benefit to the patient); two heads were better than one, &c., &c. (I have known them when equally thick to complicate business), and various other little

aphorisms he launched; and it all ended in one messenger being sent to Lisleburgh, for Dr Abercrombie, and another to Gorham for Harold Falcon, at his cousin's request.

Naturally they both came. The cousin was a real comfort, the physician was a real bore. He was one of those men who had traded all his life upon the mental weaknesses of his fellow-creatures. Tough, hard, educated on oatmeal porridge and mountain air, it is doubtful whether he believed in physical weakness. He was one of those men whose cleverness consisted in half-a-dozen theories driven to their utmost, and a general disregard of the *convenances* of society. He didn't agree with Fitz-druggett, that's one thing, but he wouldn't have agreed with an angel from heaven, scarcely with his own dinner, because it had not been ordered by himself.

'Collar-bone, indeed!' said he with a good strong accent, which I cannot spell, and the breadth of which is not compressible into the width of an ordinary page. 'What for does he go out fechtin' wi' stags, as if his long legs would serve him for horns,' which polite speech was fully audible, but scarcely comprehensible to his hearers.

'Fitz-druggett had been drenching the mon as if he was a horse,' which was not strictly true, and,

‘if they’d only let him alone, ablins he’d get well o’ himself,’ the most sensible thing he’d said yet. Then he took his oatmeal porridge,—in preference to salmon, cold grouse pie, and venison cutlets, which were ordered for him by Mrs Long Range’s housekeeper,—his leave and his fee, which latter his eccentricity did not urge him to refuse.

Before he went he took care to insult all the women he saw by stating that they laced too tight, and that they were quite as likely to have inflammation of the lungs as the gentleman up-stairs, and had done quite as much to deserve it.

There could be no doubt however at the end of a few more days that Lord Hawkestone had inflammation of the lungs, and that it would go hard with him. Lord Falconberg was sent for, and came over from Gorham; and Lady Helen was written to, but something short of the truth was told her. So she did not come. Not however because, as Mrs Long Range thought, she shared the prejudices of certain ladies of the *haute volée*. To tell the truth, Mrs Long Range was perfectly irreproachable, but her mother had not been so; and it is a duty mankind owes to heaven or to itself to take care that if the fathers have eaten sour grapes, the children’s teeth shall be set on edge.

Lord Hawkestone was very ill. Lord Falconberg and Harold, who knew his delicacy of constitution in his apparently healthy frame, were much alarmed; and as he was not able to be moved, were backwards and forwards constantly. The winter was coming, too, which made the matter worse. The virulence of the disease, however, under other management than that of Dr Abercrombie, at length yielded to treatment; and in a month's time Lord Hawkestone was able to be taken home. A rest of a few days at Gorham seemed further to re-establish his health, or his strength; and by easy stages he set out for England. 'Let's go down to the cottage at Egmont, Harold, and be quiet. I'm afraid I shall not see the Houghton meeting this year.'

'Never mind; only try to get well. I can see about the horses for you. Railroads are some use, when one's in a hurry.' And that was the extent of the praise that Harold, or his cousin, an old four-in-hand man, could ever be got to lavish upon a system which has cost so much science, intelligence, labour, life, money, and rascality.

'What's to be done about the hounds, Harold?' said he again after a pause.

'I'll go down alternate weeks to Hawkestone, and Lady Helen can come up to you, till you get

strong enough to go down with us. Lord Falconberg will be there, for he expects a large party to shoot,—the Delameres, Blakes, old Lady Morningfield, the Walkingames, and I think the duke and duchess. By-the-by, the duke I'm sure would take the management, and the kennels needn't be altered.' So it was settled that for the present Lord Hawkestone was to be an invalid, much to his chagrin, and that the party at Hawkestone Castle must do without him or his cousin.

The old lord was querulous, and didn't like it. But he dearly loved Hawkestone, so he gave his consent.

'I suppose he can't do without Harold, Helen?'

'I don't think he can, papa, he's so dreadfully imprudent, and there's nobody manages him like Harold. I really think he loves him almost as much as me.'

'You couldn't go, my dear; that's impossible. I've all these people coming; I wish I'd put them off. I don't feel equal to it, indeed I don't.' And as this was the first time in his life that Lord Falconberg had ever admitted that anything was too much for him, Lady Helen was not made happy by the expectation of her visitors.

'And what have you done with that German



boy, Harold ?' said Lord Hawkestone as they were about starting for England.

' Really I quite forgot him until this moment; I suppose he's at Egmont. I sent him there, and as he was to have bed and board till he heard further from us, I haven't troubled myself about him. Mrs Rice has been cooking for him, and he can do without a valet.'

' And haven't you heard from him since you started him ?'

' Yes, once; I got a letter from him to ask after you. The papers had informed him of your accident, but he said nothing about himself.'

' I forgot to show you the letter which he brought with him, when you picked him up at the lower bridge. There it is ; that will tell you something about his antecedents and his expectations ; and you must take my word for his mother's good looks.' Saying which he handed the letter to Harold Falcon. Having extracted a closely-written note from the envelope, Harold ran his eye down it, and beheld the legible signature of his old acquaintance Bernhard Jansen.



## CHAPTER IX.

## THE SQUIRE OF EGMONT.

Now we must precede the two cousins to Egmont by a week or ten days, and visit the squire's house, as it was still called. It was not less altered than the person who sat in the squire's seat at church, but it retained its old name, like that.

In a fine large room, perfectly new in all its gilding and decoration, which was of the most elaborate description, stood the new squire himself on the morning in question. On his right-hand was the lady whom we have only once heard of as Mrs Cripplegate, and near her again a very pretty girl in a *chaise longue*, whom the reader has before seen at Richmond, when Mr Cripplegate took it into his head to introduce himself to Lord Hawkestone and Harold. This had happened about eighteen months before. All had grown, as things will grow—the alderman in girth, and his wife in rigidity, but his daughter only had improved.

The room which I had begun to describe was evidently set out as for some imposing and unlooked-for ceremony. It was longer in proportion to its size than it was broad ; and in the centre, or rather more than half-way along it, the architect or the alderman had placed two handsome marble pillars ; whether he expected the ceiling to tumble down or not I don't know, but it looked like it. The door was at one end, at the other was a very large and handsome fire-place, and over it a large window, an uncommon but not unpleasing arrangement. One side of the room looked on to the park, over a lovely country, losing itself in a species of fog common to suburban landscape ; the other side was covered with such an assortment of modern pictures as might be expected in a house where money was made to do the work of taste and education. Of one thing you might be quite sure, the frames were most unexceptionable for depth and gilding.

But amid all these beauties—and there were several true beauties of art—the eye was at once attracted to the end of the room where the fire-place and window occupied the central space. On each side of that was a picture indeed. I have seen, and so may the reader have seen, some grand old daub in the house of some great man,

representing the present peer's grandfather and grandmother, in some ambassadorial robes, which were worn at St Petersburg or at Vienna, a daub presented to the then ambassador as a mark of more honour than discernment. These things are attractive : eminently so, as Gog and Magog in Guildhall, a peony in the button-hole of an undertaker, or the clock-tower at the Houses of Parliament. But not so startling as the pictures which presented themselves to the ravished sight on each side of the window. There was a full-breadth portrait of Alderman Cripplegate, Lord Mayor of London, and a full-length pendant of Mrs Alderman Cripplegate, as she appeared on the auspicious night of their inaugural dinner. Nothing could be more rubicund, more brilliant ; and the subject not unfitted to the powers of a Rubens, could these degenerate days have produced a master as ambitious of immortality as the sitter.

Beneath each of these pictures, on the present occasion, two handsome chairs of a Louis quatorze pattern were placed, and an appropriate footstool in front of each. There was a dignity too, that is, a civic dignity, a prominence of stomach about the man, which tallied well with the curtains and general ornamentation of the room in which the three were come together. Miss Cripplegate

looked much at her ease, but somewhat ashamed of the anticipated proceedings, while her mother drew herself into a rigidity of erection befitting the serious nature of the case.

‘Don’t you think, pa dear, you’d better let me tell them by degrees; they’ll soon get accustomed to it.’

‘I think not, my dear Isabella, there’s a form in these things.’

‘But you don’t want me. I’m sure mamma doesn’t want my support.’

‘I think, my dear, you had better stay,’ said mamma, ‘it will be more becoming.’

‘Oh, certainly, dear! if you wish it. Only, you see, there’s no chair for me—’

The young lady had no time to finish her speech before the door opened, and a deputation of servants arrived. There could have been none omitted; and considering there were but three people to wait upon, their numbers were imposing. Two by two they walked up the room, while the master and mistress took their seats upon the chairs beneath their pictures. From the supercilious-looking butler to the smallest kitchen-maid, who had rapidly covered up her grease-spots with a clean white apron, they were all there, to the number of thirteen or fourteen.

They formed a very elaborate semicircle round their master and mistress, the young lady having, after all, beaten a hasty retreat by a side door.

‘My friends,’ said the master, without getting up, but assuming a true Carlton-house attitude, such as Sir Thomas Lawrence delighted in. ‘My friends,’—the under-groom pulled the front of his hair, for which he received an expressive though sly kick from the coachman, and a severe frown from the cook,—‘I have called you together to-day, not to detain you many minutes—for work’s work, and time’s valuable—but to explain to you the honour’—and here he aspirated it so much that he had no more aspirates left for the end of his speech, ‘which her Majesty has done me during the past week.’ ‘Yes, sir,’ was pronounced all in one word. ‘And that answer brings me at once to the—the—back-bone’ (he was a fishmonger, you know) ‘of my—my—what I have to say. You must no longer call me sir.’ ‘No, sir,’ said they simultaneously, with one exception, the head-gardener, who replied, slowly and solemnly, ‘No, mum.’

I regret to say that the ladies-maid’s mirth became almost reprehensible.

‘I was going to say, my friends’ (an expres-

sion which implies that wholesome care which the rich man always has for his servants), 'that her Majesty has been graciously pleased to confer upon me the honour and title of Knighthood.' Here a knife-cleaner had got so far as 'Three cheers for—' when he was checked by a housemaid who pulled his hair so violently that what should have been 'the Queen,' ended in a prolonged 'Oh—oh—oh.'

'From this time, therefore,' continued Sir Samuel Cripplegate, 'you will always address your mistress as "my Lady," on every occasion,' said he, adding emphasis by his pronunciation, 'you will address the late Mrs Cripplegate as "my Lady."' Here he halted to give due weight to the command.

'Yes, my Lord,' said the gardener, again, whose simple mind had never yet separated the two; and who having lived in good places before, was quite ignorant of anything between a coronet and that charming equality which we all enjoy as ladies and gentlemen.

'No, my good man,' and Sir Cripplegate condescended to explain, 'you will call me, upon all occasions, Sir Samuel.'

'Yes, Sir Samuel,' shouted Mr Splinters the coachman, and he was followed in due form, first

in his euphonious address, and then out of the room.

They had no sooner left the room than Sir Samuel and Lady Cripplegate looked steadily at one another, and then, as though simultaneously smitten with the solemnity of the occasion, embraced. ;

There were other little acts of suzerainty practised by the worthy knight and dame; no, not quite that, Lady Margaret his wife—this was only the social phase that it assumed. For instance, he asked the curate, the doctor, and the lawyer of Egmont to dinner together, and nearly poisoned them. Fell asleep himself after the cloth was removed, and forgot to pass the wine. Took the chair at all parish meetings. Said the responses so loudly in church as to disturb the congregation, and addressed himself and his friends aloud as ‘dearly beloved brethren’—showing thereby his great knowledge of the business, to say nothing of his natural intelligence. He ordered his keeper also to trap the foxes, ‘destructive wermins,’ and to let the old women on the estate have the rooks at two-pence and the rabbits at four-pence a-piece. He let a few acres of his land on building-lease at an enormous price, and managed so as to get it back into

his own hands when the lessee could not fulfil the contract: and he did three or four little things of that sort, which proved him to be quite a pattern for *modern* squires, and just the sort of person to make himself generally respected.

Of one thing, however, you may be quite assured, Sir Samuel Cripplegate had plenty of money; and one truth he knew, that it was well not to give too much in order that he might have the more to give. The mere possession of money commands respect; we keep our love for the proper use of it.

Sir Cripplegate, as our intelligent neighbours would call him, or Sir Samuel, as we must now call him, had taken eighteen months in pulling down the old substantial-looking red-brick house which did for the late proprietor, a fine old gentleman of the old school, and in setting up in its place a very fine palatial residence of the Italian school. The offices were first-class, for the obvious reason that servants who serve great people must be well cared for: and when Lady Cripplegate intended to be condescending, which she announced as a duty the aristocracy owed to society, she invariably talked about her servants. It was scarcely appreciated by her professional neigh-



bours, who were some of them gentlefolks, and had been accustomed to society at least as good as that of their new squire.

When the servants assembled for dinner on this 'appy day, as the old gentleman called it, they did not forget to drink his health. 'Mr Sacks,' said Mrs Glassfillan, 'have you plenty of sherry out at your end of the table?'

'Hample, ma'am,' replied he, 'leastways, there's more, if it's wanted, in my pantry.'

'Then suppose we say grace,' and they obeyed the old Presbyterian's suggestion.

'This is a great honour that's fallen on the governor, Splinters,' said the butler, sipping his port after the women were gone, and holding it up to the light. It wasn't quite the best, but very near it.

'Well, I suppose so. A borough knight's a great person, Mr Sacks, in the Parliamentary Reform days. Jim,' said he, at the same time addressing one of the stablemen, 'don't you forget; as our carriage is ordered at four precisely, you'd better help yourself at once.' And the young man complied so naturally, that no one would have believed but that it was almost a daily habit.

'And which carriage does missus—my lady, I mean—go out in to-day?'

‘The bārouch ; the chariot’s gone up to some new place, the Herald’s College, I think they calls it, to have some new harms painted on the panel, instead of the old crest. Besides, the borough knight’s going too.’

‘You’re wrong, Splinters, indeed you are, depend on it you’re wrong. He’s no more of a borough knight than you nor me. A borough knight’s a knight as serves in Parliament for a borough. I lived with Sir Willoughby Greasepat, who was member for Dusthoe ; and his eldest son, and he was member after his father’s death, took the title too, and became Sir Tristram.’ Here the two nodded cordially to one another and took another glass, while a footman and groom, and one or two who sat below the salt, went out. Mr Splinters was evidently shy of asking questions, and yet his thirst for knowledge was so great as to overcome this reticence. He thought a minute or two, and then determined upon the advisability of being correct.

‘The young lady don’t take no title from this, I suppose, Sacks ?’

‘No, not exactly. Of course when a man’s knighted, his family, ’specially the women, goes up with him. That’s the nature of all light things,’

says Mr Sacks, who was a bit of a wag, 'but there's no title goes with 'em.'

'Well, then, she don't go down to dinner before Lady Helen Falcon?' again inquires Mr Splinters in his ignorance.

'Lady Helen Falcon! bless your heart, Splinters,' replies the other, 'what are you thinking about? Lady Helen's a real lady! a regular out and outer.'

'And don't she look it, Sacks?' and here Splinters smacked his lips again, but as he filled his glass once more, it might have been at the port.

After sitting some time longer in contemplative silence, Splinters looked at his watch. He found he had plenty of time yet, and Mrs Glassfillan, who had been to change her dress, and had substituted a very handsome brown front for her respectable iron-grey natural produce of the morn-ing, came in to take another glass with the gentlemen.

'You must have seen a good deal of the world, Sacks, when you lived with those parliament gents,' recommenced Splinters, making the most of his time with the port.

'A good deal,' says the other. 'Mrs Glassfillans, allow me, ma'am.'

‘Queerish lot, I suppose. Got some rum stories to tell, I’ll be bound.’

‘Well, they have. Expensive work, I can tell you. Sometimes, too, as friendly as possible at home, there they was abusing one another in the House like anything; we see it all in the papers. And then they’d come and eat and drink, and laugh at the ministers and the people and all.’

‘Laugh at the people, would they?’ said the old lady, who seemed rather staggered, and personally aggrieved.

‘I believe you. If you’d only heard ’em about reform! They are all alike. As to our wanting a vote! what’s he to do with it, says one, when he’s got it? They’d never a thought of it, if it hadn’t been for Potter and Bright, and these fellows, says another. They only want to serve their own turn, and then throw over both parties, says a third.’

‘Well, Sacks, I don’t see much use in a vote. Do you care about it yourself?’ asking which question Splinters put on a wise and serious face.

‘Yes, I do; leastways about election times. Now take me, there’s a case in pint. I leave service, marries, most likely, Mrs Glassfillan, though you do shake your head. Then I take a house, a pretty good house, and furnish it well,

down Westminster way, or down Pimlico, or thereabouts; and we take lodgers, live down-stairs and let all the floors to well-to-do sort of people, who get their two hundred a-year or so, but no vote. Well, there comes an election, they want to obleege this one or that one, and they all come to me. I promise or not, as the case may be. If it's a close fight, John Sacks' vote becomes valuable.'

'But that's bribery,' says Mr Splinters sententiously.

'Ha, ha, ha,' laughs the other; 'these are not times when every gent inquires why coals should have been on the rise, nor what makes butter and heggs and butchers' meat twenty-five per cent. dearer for a month or two, especially if the right man wins. Why, Splinters, a vote 'ud be a very good thing for you.'

'Would it now?'

'Indeed it would. There's your boy, he's the very thing for the Excise, or something o' that kind. There's plenty of 'em; but I say, stick to the Excise. Lor, they used to come in shoals to Sir Willoughby's. At last he told me he always bid a deal more for an unmarried vote; it saved him in two ways. There were no women to refuse, and no boys to provide for in the Customs. But those good times are gone.'

‘But I thought you was all for extending the franchise, Sacks?’

‘So I am; I’d like it myself, and master’s a radical. But there’s a limit, you know, Splinters, there’s a limit; I shouldn’t go as far as him now.’

‘You wouldn’t?’ said Splinters, who wanted to learn and not to talk.

‘No, I wouldn’t, and I’ll tell you why. He’d like manhood suffrage; and then there’d be no more use and no more privilege in votes.’

‘And why so, Sacks? I don’t see it.’

‘Cos there’d be such a precious lot on us, that it ’ud ruin any one as attempted to buy us. There’d never be another bid.’

‘Well, one thing I’d like to see righted,’ says Splinters, unhooking his wig and coat from a peg in the room, and preparing to go. ‘Our curate as comes here to dinner hasn’t got a vote, because he lives at Mrs Mutton’s, in the village; and that ignorant beast Tulips, who pulls his hair to the squire, and sings out “Yes, my lord,” when he should a’ said “Yes, Sir Cripplegate,” has a vote, because he lives in a mud hovel outside o’ the village, which he calls his freehold,’ with which sensible remark Mr Splinters buttoned his coat, and in a quarter of an hour our carriage came round.

My lady sat well forward ; and if ever there was an excuse for exhibiting a not very handsome person to the gaze of the multitude it is when a sovereign's favour has added extraordinary lustre to a name. Sir Samuel was not disposed to blush the honour either ; he faced his wife and daughter with an air which should say, ' Our talents, our integrity, the great name of Cripplegate, and the unrivalled powers of the Fishmongers combined, have gotten me this great victory.' I wonder what this small unostentatious suburb thinks of itself now that it has the protecting ægis of true greatness thrown over it ? And then very naturally he thought that an occasion must be made for showing so much dignity to the world's eye by a dinner or two.

' My dear, I hear Captain Falcon has come down with his cousin, Lord Hawkestone.'

' I heard so, and that he is in delicate health.'

' Not too delicate to dine in a friendly way at the 'All, I hope, my lady.'

' Possibly not, my—Sir Samuel, I mean. But you must call upon his lordship first. Etiquette's everything, Sir Samuel, in such cases.' They had begun very well, and scarcely made a mistake over the unwonted nomenclature. If new-made

honour forgets men's names, it is usually careful to remember its own titles.

‘I believe, Lady Cripplegate, I have already had the honour of an introduction,’ and he assumed considerable importance on that score. Sir Samuel loved to be a hero to his own wife ; assuredly he was not one to his own valet. The reader recollects the peculiarities of his introduction, and how little it had been sought for or appreciated. ‘However, you’re right, my lady. Splinters, stop at Captain Falcon’s villa on the way back, and inquire for Lord Hawkestone. Suppose we offer that young man, the painter, Mr Fellowes, a little fishing in the park ? Perhaps his lordship might like it, my dear. I think he seems amiable and most intelligent for a foreigner.’ Sir Samuel was a good old Englishman to the backbone, at all events ; and never disguised his sentiments on that head.

‘Not necessary at all, Sir Samuel,’ said the lady, who was more prudent than her husband. ‘You’ll first find out what position he holds in Captain Falcon’s house, as he announced himself to us as a professional artist ; and then we can be guided by our experience of that position to retire or advance.’

If Sir Samuel was not so good at his grammar



as he might have been, Lady Cripplegate never faltered. She believed that the right thing to do was to clothe nakedness in elaborate language, and she practised her belief.

‘Captain Falcon not at home, and Lord Hawkestone not well enough to come down yet.— Bless me, not serious, I hope; be good enough to give these cards. The ‘All,’ with which Shibboleth, pronounced in a very loud voice, the footman mounted the box and Splinters drove home.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE ARISTOCRACY AT EGMONT.

I COMMENCE this chapter under a sense of great depression. I have been reading divers criticisms on the works of others, and the singular difference of opinion expressed by equally eminent persons leaves me in a melancholy uncertainty as to my own fate. There is one sort of book, I am told, which must give pleasure,—I don't say which will be universally successful, but which will give pleasure to some persons; and that is one so palpably full of faults that it must afford amusement to the reviewers. I do not desire to write such a book as this. Nor do I think it wise to deprecate criticism. When a man has once begun to publish he becomes public property; or rather, I should say, his works do, not himself. It ought to make no difference to his reviewers whether he be hump-backed, or blear-eyed; hyperion-locked, or satyr-skinned; whether he be a rail-

way director, or an archbishop,—his book is the thing with which they are concerned. A writer is like a horse-owner : so long as he confines his canter to Rotten-row, what matters it to any man whether he goes fast or slow, or where he stops his horse ? But so soon as he shall have emerged into daylight on Newmarket Heath, the world says that he is no longer his own master, and must accept of praise or dispraise, as he may be found to deserve the one or the other. There's another row called Paternoster-row, and I suppose I shall be told that that's my place.

But I like criticism, and always try to profit by it. I'm a hardened offender now ; strong and tough, have had all my short terms, and am quite up to six months, or two years and hard labour. I can bear it without any fear of that despondent madness which produces suicide or matrimony in the young. Only, as I said, I like my books to bear it, not myself. They are bound to do so : calf-hide, Russia, and other things that are durable. I am neither calf-hide nor Russia. I recollect so well what I did. I determined to take advantage, when I was young and green, of all the suggestions I could gather from the critics. One was very lenient (indeed, I am happy to say that I have much to be thankful for), and after summing

up more excellences even than I think I could lay claim to, said, 'But Mr C. has something still to learn from Mr — and Mrs —.' And I found that I had: I had to learn to avoid their faults, if nothing else. I rushed to the libraries at once, and procured their works (for I am not much given to modern novelists, and when I have accomplished Lord Lytton, George Elliott, Whyte Melville, and one or two more, always retire upon Walter Scott, and Fielding, and other strong meats). I think my zeal was thrown away, I know my time was. Mr — was a strongly sensational writer, as I was afterwards told, of the Family Herald school, made up of impossible maniacs and strong-minded modern assassination. Mrs — wrote bad English, and appeared to have discovered success in sesquipedalian or hendecasyllabic words. When other people *thought*, she *deemed*, and the substitution appeared so often that at last I gave it up, lest a spasmodic affection to substitute another highly improper word, but very like it, should eventually get the better of me.

Since that time I have attended to the suggestions of criticism, which I have challenged with a view to improvement, but have not studied the illustrious examples which modern bookmaking sets before me. But it really seems to me as

difficult to learn to write as to learn to row. I wrote this within two days of the University boat race, when conflicting testimony declares that number four rowed with his back too much bent, and bow put no strength into his legs, or all into his legs, that number seven ought to have been stroke, and stroke could not be better ; that Oxford was too slow on the feather, and Cambridge too fast, and the reverse ; until the unfortunate subjects of these encouraging remarks might have been excused for refusing to row at all.

Now that's the case with us writers, who are honestly willing to learn, if the critics will but teach us. But we can learn nothing, if one reviewer derides our plot and praises our style, while another declares our style to be saved by the excellence of our plot. Until some correct rules of criticism are published or acted upon, we must turn to the discerning public who pays us ; and if it pays us we cannot but believe in its honesty. Bread and butter is as necessary as fame, more so when meat is so dear as to be beyond the reach of Grub Street. What a misnomer ! So for the present, I am going for popularity : if any one has anything to say against it, let him say it.

‘ At mihi plaudo

*Ipse domi, simul ac nummos contemplor in arcâ.*’

I shall congratulate myself at home when I get the cheque of my good friend, Mr —.

When Lord Hawkestone got to London he was very tired, so tired as to wish to remain there, which he did, and saw his friend Lobel, while Harold came on to Egmont to make things comfortable.

Harold's mind too was troubled about George Fellowes, the half German or Dutch artist, whom he had made his guest for Hawkestone's sake. He felt a great anxiety to see the boy again, and to talk to him, and question him more closely than he had done. Nor could there be a better opportunity than for a few days while Lord Hawkestone recruited himself in London. There was nobody in town to tire him, and he had his man Wrench with him, who was a host in himself. Wrench was equal to any amount of parleying in the gate when his master was to be kept quiet.

The sight of this young George Fellowes brought back to Harold's mind very many reminiscences of a time gone by. Old Jansen's grandson ! and what extraordinary obligations existed between himself and Jansen. What wonderful pieces of paper had passed between them ; what ' I.O.U,' and ' I promise to pay,' and ' ten to ones,'

and 'twenty to ones,' and what a time of roystering, and steeplechasing, and general impecuniosity recurred to the captain from the contemplation of a rather good-looking, blue-eyed, yellow-haired boy, of eighteen or nineteen.

'First of all,' said Harold Falcon to himself, 'he's too foreign-looking—it's artist-like, that long hair and velvet coat, but not gentleman-like. I suppose he'll get over it after being in England some little time. I must have a talk to Hawkestone. Well, Mr Fellowes, how do you like our country?' here he addressed the man himself, who had just walked in from the station, having spent the morning as usual at Peter McGilp's, an old artist friend of his grandfather, as he said.

'I've only seen the good side of it at present, Captain Falcon.'

'Where did you learn to speak English so well?'

'My grandfather lived a long time in this country, and my mother is an Englishwoman. She was born here, and so was her mother.'

'And your father?' said the captain, looking pretty hard at him.

'Died before I was born : I never knew him.'

'Are you bent upon your present occupation—I mean art?'

‘I certainly prefer it to anything else. In Holland I had but one alternative, that or the army.’

‘Why so?’ said Harold, wondering why he should not have taken the latter.

‘There’s nothing else for a gentleman to do. I could be *negociant*, but I had no taste for it, and my mother wished for the army.’

‘Why didn’t you gratify her ambition?’

‘Plait-il, monsieur.’ The fact is, he spoke English so well that it was possible to become too colloquial in one’s expressions, and Harold had been so.

‘I mean, why didn’t you go into the army?’

‘Because my grandfather had a knowledge of art himself, and thought—well, he was presumptuous perhaps—that I might make my fortune in England.’ George Fellowes looked down and seemed ashamed of his own or his grandfather’s effrontery.

‘Fortune in England befalls a few, but few in anything but trade. I mean absolute trade. Every profession, even art, has its millionnaires—one, two, three, half-a-dozen, fortunes have been made by painting: novel-writing, well—no, hardly that—but a livelihood—but, the fortunes are made at the cost of the many. Mediocrity starves.



Now go up and dress for dinner, and we'll smoke a cigar together in my room afterwards.'

Ah! that dressing for dinner found him out. 'Dress for dinner! now, what does that mean?' said George Fellowes to himself—'dress for dinner; well! I must wash my hands and brush my hair: but for dressing, I don't see how I can do that—my other coat is scarcely so good as this.' But when he came down and saw Harold Falcon, he knew all about it, and apologized for not having *brought his clothes*. A very few days rectified that. It was a first step, and a very important one in the general move.

After dinner they went into Harold's own room. All the world knows what one's own room means: walking-sticks and umbrellas in the corners; driving whips (at least it used to be so) hanging along one side of the room; a very curious bit, capable of holding anything; a case of guns, Purday, Lancaster, and a Nock—there were no breech-loaders in those days; a large mahogany and glass wardrobe, it held cigars of all ages and sizes—which in cigars, by the way, are not necessarily coincident. There was a Burn's Justice, a Bell's Life, the Sporting Magazine, and Baily; a list of the Hawkestone kennels, a bailiff's book, an Army List on the

table; a single-volumed novel, and a good library on the shelves. Could this be anything but one's own room?

'How do you find the neighbourhood—I'm afraid Lord Hawkestone's illness has made it rather dull for you, being here alone?' said he, good-humouredly.

'Oh no, I'm never dull! I had my sketch-book, and I've been to London most days to Mr McGilp's. Sir Samuel Cripplegate has been very civil to me; I've been there fishing, and dined there twice.'

'Sir Samuel Cripplegate; now, who can he be?' said Harold to himself.

'Sir Samuel Cripplegate. He lives at the large Italian-looking house in the park, at the other end of the village.'

'Mr Cripplegate, you mean—now I know—he's the new squire,' and Harold Falcon recalled the Richmond dinner, and the unexpected acquaintance they made.

'Ah! he's Sir Samuel now, a knight or a baronet, or something of that sort. He left his card here to-day.' Harold was satisfied with the explanation, which the reader will have fully understood to be correct.

‘Any family?’ inquired the captain, after a long pause.

‘A daughter,’ and George Fellowes blushed; but blushes don’t show by gas-light.

‘Anybody else been to see you?’

‘The clergyman. I like him; and I think he came here to ask after Lord Hawkestone. It was after we heard of his illness.’

‘Yes. Fenwick’s a good fellow: a gentleman; and that’s not the case even with all the clergymen in England—nor in Germany,’ said Harold, after a moment.

‘We knew but one, and he was of the Reformed Church.’

‘Is it a life that would suit you?’ inquired his host, abruptly.

‘What, at home?’

‘No: here. You’ll hardly go back again.’

‘Why not? I’m here only to study. You forget, in your kindness, that I have a mother and a grandfather.’

Harold Falcon had not forgotten it. But he looked away from George Fellowes, and said nothing. Then they sat in silence for some time. At last, with an apparent effort, which was meant to look like ease, he said,

‘You never showed me any likeness of your mother—have you one?’

‘Here’s a sketch that I took of her before I left Cleves.’ And he handed over to Harold a book which he carried in the pocket of his velvet coat. There could be no mistake as to the likeness. It was Margaret Jansen, with the addition of many years and much trouble.

It was on this very day that Sir Samuel Crip-plegate had called.

In a day or two Lord Hawkestone followed his cousin into the country. He was very weak, but Egmont seemed to agree with him better than London; and in the course of the week he went out in the carriage. As he was difficult to manage when once on his legs, Harold did his best to keep him to the carriage as long as he could: but another week found him sauntering about, first in the garden, then in the road. In a very short time he chose to consider himself well, and would have his hack. And then he went to church.

It seems to be an established rule in suburban villages, and indeed in all country places, that all persons who show themselves at church are in full visiting order. If strangers arrive in a place, the circumstance of having said their

prayers in public is a sign that the carpets are down. In the East that might be all very well—one spreads one's carpet for certain purposes. If a newly-married couple enter the temple, it is an understood thing that their privacy is over; that their minds are in a fit state for admitting visitors with some degree of patience. 'My dear, I think we should call, the Dobbins were at church this morning.' 'Why, my goodness, Mrs Jones, she only lost her mother the week before last: Dobbin may like to be congrat— I mean that Dobbin may not feel the loss so deeply; but his wife—' 'Of course, my dear Jones, if his wife is well enough to go to church, she wishes people to call.' And so, it would seem, the neighbours thought of Lord Hawkestone.

All the people called to inquire; and it should be remarked that this had nothing extraordinary in it. If the poorest author or the most inconsiderable person of their circle had been ill, the suburban squires, clergymen, lawyers, bankers, brokers, or whatever occupations those populations embrace, would have been equally anxious to know how he was. They were not constrained by any regard for rank. They never are. They couldn't all ask Harold and his guest to dinner, because a time of sickness is not a time to begin

such civilities, but all who could with any propriety did so.

Sir Samuel Cripplegate of course was among the number. Had he not extended his hospitality to the poor artist, and was he not now going to reap his reward? He certainly would have done so, but Hawkestone steadily refused all invitations. His health was really too bad for such dissipation, and night air was strictly forbidden. The newly-made knight was seriously disappointed that his good things should not be put into the mouth that cared nothing about them. It was rather troublesome to have to give them only to people who enjoyed them so much.

Generosity is not a rare virtue, excepting in its highest purity. Like sovereigns, it is very valuable, even with its alloy. That alloy is ostentation. Some people, a few really bad fellows, have no generosity at all; a great many possess a certain amount of it with much ostentation: a great number possess it with some ostentation: a very few possess the virtue without the alloy. Sir Samuel was of the second numerous class. He could, and loved, to spend money when it was known and talked about, and when great people could be made to participate in its pleasures. Wise men would not call this generosity at all; but wise men are as

scarce as the truly generous. So we must accept generosity as we find it. Generous men for our purpose, therefore, are those who part freely with their money for any reason but pure selfishness, which can't be attributed to those who give to others, even for their own gratification ; and Sir Samuel was one of these. Selfishness and self-love are not purely identical.

But Sir Samuel, notwithstanding his title, and my Lady's rigidity of grammar, worthy of nothing less than the new Primer, and Miss Isabella's looks, who was a very good sort of lounging beauty, had made a mistake in the matter of foxes.

For ——shire was a fox-hunting country ; and as the great pleasure of sundry noblemen and gentlemen about it was to destroy foxes, of course it was their duty, and the duty of all men, who called themselves gentlemen, to preserve them.

'Harold, here's old Cripplegate's note, with an invitation to dinner. I'm not going, of course ; but if you like a good dinner, I should think you're very likely to get it,' said his Lordship, who looked none the better for his visit to church.

'Impossible to dine there. Why, he kills foxes.'

‘My dear, what’s this?’ says a country gentleman, whom we have met elsewhere, but who now lives in ——shire, fingering a note which his wife has just handed him. ‘Sir Samuel and Lady Cripplegate request the pleasure of Mr and Mrs Tilbury Nogo’s company at dinner.’ ‘Well, that’s rather good; why, he orders his keeper to trap foxes. No, certainly not. One can’t expect lawyers, and merchants, and tradesmen, and these sort of cockneys by whom we’re surrounded, to know much about fox-hunting; but an ostentatious old snob, who calls himself a squire, and doesn’t hunt or subscribe to the hounds, is a pretty fellow to trap the foxes and then ask people to dinner.’

And Mr Tilbury Nogo’s seemed to be a very general opinion.

As the winter advanced, however, all prospect of Lord Hawkestone’s entering again into society was reluctantly given up. He grew manifestly weaker. The last glorious days of an English autumn found him reduced to the sunny side of their well-sheltered garden, and the winter to an arm-chair in Harold’s own room. The alternative of Madeira or the south had been offered him, but had produced nothing but an assurance that he should be better in England.



Lobel ceased to press it, and Cardiac had been honest enough never to recommend it. Lord Hawkestone took no less interest than usual in his daily occupations and in his friends. He was no less careful of others, in that he required more care for himself. He often spoke seriously to Harold of the change that must come soon, and Harold had ceased to affect to misunderstand him.

Lord Falconberg had been two or three times to see his son for a few days together, bringing with him Lady Helen, and leaving her. Harold took these opportunities of going back with his uncle, who had an objection to being left alone, and yet seemed unwilling to shut up Hawkestone Castle entirely. You don't suppose that he any longer clung to his former belief that Lord Hawkestone's lungs were not affected. At all events, Lady Helen's tearful eyes and Harold's assurances ought to have undeceived him. The business of the hounds had been easily arranged. The good Duke did all that, and he and his Duchess sincerely sympathized with Lord Falconberg. Lady Di, if the truth must be told, did something more. It might have been unmaidenly; I'm told it is, where no declaration has been made: but ladies in their own right have

hearts very like those of milkmaids, only it's *mauvais ton* to show them. I do not approve myself of bottling up trumps. Among other things which had been subject of discussion between the cousins was the situation of George Fellowes in the house. After a time he was obliged to go, and was now studying high art with Mr McGilp.

McGilp was a good, conscientious sort of man, as far as a Scotchman can be said to have a conscience where money is involved. He kept the young fellow to his work, gave him good instruction, took care that he was in betimes at night, and introduced him to a very moral and disagreeable set of men, none of whom had the education of gentlemen, and few the feelings. He did all this, partly because he thought it right, partly because he liked his old friend's grandson, and partly because he saw money to be made out of his intellect and exertions. The world is full of mixed motives—quite made up of them.

‘Harold, if I’d foreseen this illness of mine I never would have bored you with that boy. This comes of art-patronage.’

Harold Falcon smiled at the notion, and said, ‘I’m not bored with George Fellowes. Indeed, I’ve not seen him lately.’

‘What’s to be done with him now? I’ve arranged for his studying with McGilp; but I think he ought to go back, unless you feel sufficient interest to take him in hand, and that’s hardly possible.’

‘But indeed I do, my dear Hawkestone. I feel the greatest interest in him,’ and here Harold looked down at his feet as he swung backwards and forwards in a rocking-chair.

‘I don’t think I ever told you his history, or rather what I know of it,’ said the one.

‘I think you did not; but you seemed to know very little about him.’ Upon which Lord Hawkestone repeated what the reader knows already of the meeting at Cleves.

‘Jansen is an old acquaintance of mine,’ said Harold Falcon. ‘You never mentioned his name; and until you gave me his letter, I didn’t know who the boy was.’

‘And what do you know of him now beyond that?’

‘Little enough, I admit. His mother was Jansen’s daughter.’

‘That I know. And his father?’

Harold Falcon hesitated some moments. ‘His father? ah! there’s the difficulty. His father is, I believe, a gentleman.’

‘But you don’t know who, Harold? Is his mother married?’

‘Married? Well—yes—yes—certainly, she is married. But, Hawkestone, you spoke of the boy going back to Germany. I think he might be educated in England. I mean, might have the education of an English gentleman.’

‘What, at a University?’ said Hawkestone, with some surprise.

‘Well—yes—or for the army; and, you see, if he should prove to be a gentleman’s son—any one of position, for instance—art, except of the highest quality, is a little questionable.’ Harold’s hesitation rather increased.

‘Questionable! I think not, for a man likely to occupy his position. But, my dear Harold, you seem to have some feeling or prejudice on the subject. Let us look at it fairly. I shall not live to do all I wished to do for him; not much more, probably. Well, well, Harold; never mind, old fellow,’ for Harold had come over to his cousin, and had taken his hand in his own. ‘They’re not in want of money, I fancy, and we might do anything you liked about it. It’s as well to ask the lad himself about such a thing. We’ll talk it over another time.’ And then they changed the conversation. Harold was not sorry;

and soon after Lord Hawkestone rang for his servant, and went to bed. So did Harold, after a time; and as he lay awake thinking of many things—the change that must come to his cousin, and in such case most probably to himself, he didn't feel satisfied that he had been quite candid enough. He made up his mind to be more so on another occasion.

## CHAPTER XI.

## LORD HAWKESTONE GOES HOME.

THE rarest thing in the world is a gentleman. The definition of the thing is very difficult. The number of the qualifications which go towards the formation is very great, and the combination very remarkable. Lord Falconberg was a perfect gentleman, as far as the character could be met with in the world. He had the essentials of high birth, a fine appearance, excellent taste and refinement in his person, occupations, furniture, horses, and *ménage*. He had been a good husband, a good father, a good master, and a good neighbour. He was generous without ostentation, and used the goods that providence had given him without abuse. He was truthful without making others feel their want of candour. And these characteristics were bound together by a temper which had enabled him to pass through life without having transgressed their obligations. A bad-tempered man, whatever his

breeding, his elegance, his education, must be constantly in danger of hurting somebody's feelings; but the great essential of a gentleman is a consideration for the poorest and most dependent of his acquaintance.

Besides this, Lord Falconberg was a religious man. That is, a man of religious feeling, of a firm and consistent faith. This does not mean that he was high church, low church, broad church, or narrow church; that he judged this man or that by some arbitrary measure of his own; that he went to early mass or matins, or ate fish in Lent, or did anything else which marked a bias for this side or that. He was too old as well as too honest for shams of any sort. It means only that he had a conscientious principle upon which he performed his duties, of a higher value than the simple necessity for setting an example to his poorer neighbours. Of course I don't mean to imply that the Sir Samuel Cripplegates of the world act in these matters upon any other principle.

Lord Falconberg had come to the villa at Egmont, at no slight inconvenience to himself; and, as he knew now, to see his only remaining son suffer. As the winter progressed, and as it was now December, it was plain that there could

be but one termination to those sufferings. It had been hard to make the old Lord see this at first. He so hoped and prayed that he might be spared this suffering. But it was not to be.

Once convinced of the truth, neither was Lord Falconberg a man to hesitate as to his course of action. He believed all the time he could spare from his numerous duties (and he never had neglected them), belonged to his son's couch. With all his feeling, too, he was loth to add one pang to what he knew must be the suffering of Lady Helen. Since the loss of her other brothers, Lord Hawkestone had been doubly dear to her. He had plenty of qualities to make him so, and Lady Helen, as we have seen, had encouraged no other to the exclusion of family ties.

And now they were assembled in this dreary season to watch the couch of the invalid, and to see fall the leaves, not of a natural autumn but of ripe spring. To remember what that fading strength had once been, its strong determinations and resolves; to wonder at the beauty which was even brighter, and the mind which was so calm and clear, in its decay; and to guess what immortality must appear to be to such a man, when all the dignities, pleasures, and affections of life were going to be soon relinquished



without a sigh. Verily, he set them a noble example of patience and consideration, which they were not slow to follow.

When Lady Helen was at Egmont, Lady Cripplegate had called upon her: and as Sir Samuel could not be kept out he too had made the acquaintance of Lord Falconberg. The Lady was more Johnsonian than ever in her periods, and the gentleman more oppressively pertinacious than usual; but neither made up for the interruption. Harold would have ruthlessly excluded them, and so would Lady Helen; but Lord Falconberg had pleaded their good intentions. So they were admitted, and bored him considerably—but he was as courageous as an Indian at the stake.

‘Harold, has anything been done about George Fellowes lately?’

‘Yes,’ said Harold; ‘it was scarcely worth troubling you. He declined the cheque you sent him: I must say, most graciously. But he assured me his expenses had been hitherto within his income, and that his grandfather would supply him, when necessary. I own I liked his independence.’

‘So do I; but that’s no reason he should lose the benefit of one’s help.’

‘Perhaps not,’ said Harold ; ‘but we may have a better opportunity of serving him in his profession ; or—’

‘Well, my dear fellow, what’s the alternative?’ said Lord Hawkestone.

‘That of changing it altogether,’ replied his cousin.

‘I’ve no sort of objection ; but men who won’t take money very seldom take advice. Do you know, my friend George has a will of his own?’

‘I think he has. Are the sketches he did for you, while here, so very clever?’

‘Yes : I think they are. My father says they are, and he’s a better judge than I am : but he thinks not enough to secure him a very high position as an artist ; so that if anything else offered—’

‘I think I know of the very thing. My uncle wants a manager or agent.’

‘But, my dear Harold, he knows no more of business than—.’ Harold Falcon certainly had taken a stride, but he interrupted his cousin by saying, ‘True, true ; but if he’s had an education we could put him under old Planner at the home farm for six weeks, and the thing would be done. You see, Lord Falconberg looks so well after

everything, he really wants an active gentlemanly young fellow—'

'My dear Harold, what would you have been fit for at that time of life?'

Now that was an *argumentum ad hominem* which staggered Harold, and set him thinking. But he seemed fully bent upon doing something or other for his cousin's *protégé*; so he listened half convinced, while Hawkestone proceeded: 'I know your kind intentions by the lad, Harold; let him go to Oxford, or get him a commission; but don't let us have any fancy agents, idle young gentlemen, with a hunter or two, and a cob to visit the short-horns and downs every day. You know my father, Harold, his business habits, and how it would distress him to find fault with a friend of ours.'

Harold saw his cousin was right, and said so. And at that moment Lord Falconberg entered the room, and after a few unimportant words turned abruptly to his nephew. 'Harold, I want you to do me a favour. I've been idle since I came up here, and I feel less inclined to go down to Hawkestone than usual. Will you go down for me? There's Williamson to see, and the arrangement about the new kennels. Helen wants to hear about her schools: there's something

wrong about the new master's appointment—that can stand over; but the covers must be shot, and you must write to the men you want.'

'There are certain men must be asked. Chesterton, and Carruthers, and your general party. There's four days good shooting; and the partridges must be driven.' This was a new fashion, lately introduced.

'Well, I think so. There are a great many left, too many; and as to killing them to dogs, that's out of the question.' Lord Falconberg spoke as if he regretted the necessity, but felt it.

'I suppose you'd like Markham to be asked, though he's a very moderate shot.'

'I think so, Harold, he'd feel it if we left him out. You must put him in a place where he'll get easy shooting.'

'And where he won't shoot anybody else. He nearly made a vacancy in the sixtieth last year. Nothing but the keeper's hat saved the Major. He was just behind old Funnel, when the shots came past him, and three corns were found in Funnel's hat.'

'Then put Funnel in front of him again,' said the old peer, laughing. 'By the way, there's a stable full of horses for you; and if you've no preference ride my new one for your first horse some

day. I think you'll like him better than anything we've had for some time.'

After which conversation Harold Falcon went up to town, leaving Lord Falconberg and Lady Helen to look after the invalid.

The pleasures of cover-shooting, that is, of periodical cover-shooting, seem to be comparative, if we are to attach any importance to the columns of some of the sporting newspapers of the day. A battue is an abomination, cruel, unsportsman-like, fit only for those who have neither spirit nor strength to enter upon the difficulties of legitimate sport. This is a very melancholy picture to draw of an amusement in which three-fourths of our aristocracy and squirarchy indulge, and appear to take so much delight, that year after year the *furor* increases. Well, a word or two on the subject may enlighten a benighted public, who are indebted for their experience to the impartial criticism of those who are either ignorant of the subject, or are wedded to the prejudices of a time long passed.

It is not unfrequently understood, and on some occasions asserted, that the guests travel down by the same train as the birds; that large hampers of tame pheasants from Leadenhall market, which may be counted by hundreds, are at least the staple ex-

ports of the London market ; and that having been reared under hens in a cellar in the modern Babylon, they are transferred to the noble earls' covers at farthest but three days before. I can honestly aver that I never travelled down with any of Lord Falconberg's birds. If I did we didn't hit upon them at any of his battues. More determined rocketers, or long tails more alive to their own interests, I never saw. Easy to kill, yes,—if you held your gun straight, and it was a good strong-shooting Purday, and the birds were within moderate reach, they were easy to kill. Cruel, are we ? we, I say, who like shooting well-stocked covers. If killing your birds clean and having them picked up and put in the cart at once, instead of taking a pot shot at a wild covey of birds, indiscriminately, while Ponto wags his sagacious tail and rushes all over the field in quest of what you have not killed, putting up any that happen to remain behind (for dogs, you know, do not down charge excepting under very favourable circumstances), then it is cruel.

But those critics should recollect that if Leadenhall market supplies the bouquet, it is the bouquet which supplies Leadenhall market ; and but for the 'wholesale slaughter' so energetically denounced, what would become of Alderman

Baconham's entertainments? With what grim disappointment would the Mansion House caterers hear that there were neither pheasants nor partridges to be met with; a pleasant thing indeed to depend upon the supplies which that fine sportsman, Longbow, with his valuable brace of prize setters, or team of clumsers, could supply! No, my good friends, if you will have great dinners and are fond of game, you, who have no large estates and magnificent woodlands of your own, thank the battues that in your short-sighted policy you abuse, and rejoice when you see that your prince and his friends, and our great nobility and millionaire merchants and stock exchange princes, condescend to slaughter thousands more in a week than they can themselves eat or give away.

Harold Falcon had just these ideas that I have about the covers at Hawkestone. So had Hawkestone himself, and old Lord Falconberg. So as soon as he got to the castle he set about making the necessary arrangements for a week in the covers; and as there was a hard frost on the ground, he made pretty sure of no refusals. The Duke came *en garçon* of course, as Hawkestone was considered to be closed for the time, and no one more regretted the cause. Lord Chesterton, one of the best shots in England, was there, and



Carruthers. Markham was disengaged, and would have made a point of being so, for the pleasure of displaying his skill. How very unconscious of their deficiencies some men are ! He was always shooting at somebody's gaiters instead of a hare, and nothing but his execrable performances rendered those indispensable accompaniments to a beater's costume safe within his reach. He came too with all sorts of guns, half-a-dozen of them, all new inventions, and on their construction was very great. Careless shot with a pair of strong heavy muzzle-loaders, and was great at partridge driving, and rabbits, shooting very forward at his pheasants, and sometimes missing them, as he knew the old lord liked his game killed clean. Harvey Westbrook was there too, with young Lord Claverhouse, a Scotch gentleman, who brought with him one of the keenest eyes and the most hearty appreciation of a battue from the wilds of his native country. His hand was practised in all the cunning of a north-country sportsman, whether with the gun, the rifle, or the rod. There were one or two more—light weights, younger brothers, or something of that sort. Harold had plenty to do with the morning's work. All were to be looked to, so that none at the end of the day should accuse him of partiality.



‘Now, Duke, if you’ll stand still here behind this bush you’ll get a shot or two, before long. We shall begin by driving. You’ve got Chesterton next to you, he won’t shoot you. I’ve got Markham next to me;’ and in a quarter of an hour or more a shout went forth, and the work of slaughter began.

Bang, bang, and lower down the line the Duke heard firing in the distance.

‘Confound them, they don’t seem inclined to come this way.’ ‘Mark, mark over;’ and as a strong covey came down with the wind, nearly knocking off the Duke’s hat, he turned and fired a right and left, the first only taking effect. Lord Chesterton was in a good place, and had already killed two brace. ‘Mark, Chesterton,’ and he had got another, when that drive came to an end.

Then away they all went, not, as is supposed, in a dainty slipshod sort of way, but in line, with the beaters between, while every minute scared and scattered partridges rose, and were killed in a handsome manner, and the gun exchanged without stopping. ‘Mark,’ and away went a covey back over the heads of the beaters, three or four of which were stopped by the quickness of men like Harold Falcon or Lord Chesterton,

who let nothing escape them. 'Different sort of thing this, Harold, to the 12th of August.'

'Yes, not quite such a certainty as an old cock grouse, with a brood ready to be kicked up under your feet as you want them. Mark, Duke,' as a single bird rose, and swinging back went right away over his head, before the Duke could get his gun to his shoulder. 'Well shot, Claverhouse,' who wiped the Duke's eye in a most sportsmanlike manner. 'Here we are at our second drive; now then, Chesterton, if you'll stop here, I'll take the Duke and Claverhouse where I think they'll get some shooting this time,' and they did.

Then there came a strong but not very prolific cover to be beaten; and Harold prepared his guests for plenty of work, but not much shooting. He himself took the lion's share of the first. As they came towards the end of the cover he hurried the guns forward, while he walked through the wood with the beaters. 'Let 'em rise when you get outside, or you'll shoot us. The cover slopes a little downward towards the meadows.' But few were shot, as they rose and went down wind at the top of the high trees. At the end of the cover they began to cross the open, and here a bag was made.

Then came luncheon. 'Who killed the woodcock?'

'Markham,' said Careless; and Markham, to his intense gratification, was congratulated.

Then came more walking; another drive, which brought the number of partridges up to nearly a hundred; and then the principal cover of that day's beat. Here it must be admitted the grumblers had some grounds for their censures. There was nothing but shooting, from the time they got into the wood to the time they came out. Those who walked along with the keepers and beaters scarcely went a moment without a shot at hare or rabbit; while, at very close intervals, a shot was heard from one of the guns at the farther end of the wood. As they advanced the game became thicker on the ground, while every thicket produced its nide of pheasants, which, rising to the height of the trees, went down to the end of the cover, few getting back. And here every gun was in requisition. 'Hold hard; right,' and then up they got again.

'I've known a hundred and fifty pheasants killed in this corner,' says the Duke, knocking over a brace, and handing his gun to his loader. 'Right,' cries the Duke; and again

as the circle narrows the sticks go, and the pheasants rise again, not in hundreds, but by the score; and as all the guns have now ranged themselves in the lane, the beating becomes regular, and the slaughter more vigorous. In spite of the gentlemen-sportsmen who write letters to the papers, and excite the sympathies of the middle-aged parsons in the shires, about snuff-taking after the birds rise, and the magnificent behaviour of Carlo, it is known that on Tuesday the usual aristocratic party assembled to shoot the covers at Hawkestone Castle, and that the first day's sport realized one thousand head, of which four hundred and sixty-two were pheasants. Then came a list of the guests, the number of guns, and the regret that Lord Falconberg was unable to open his house as usual, in consequence of the serious indisposition of Lord Hawkestone.

'A capital show of pheasants, Harold, in the long cover.'

'Very good,' says Harold; 'I hope you got some shooting. I think the other side of the river is better than this.'

'Scarcely possible,' replies another.

'Do you find much difficulty about the foxes?' inquires Lord Claverhouse.

‘None whatever; we’ve plenty of rabbits. The last cover you were in is one of our best fox covers. A certain find, and a capital country on all sides but one; and that’s the river, which they seldom cross.’

‘What did you think of Hawkestone when you left Egmont?’

‘He is certainly weaker, but not materially worse. What I fear for him most is the changeable weather in March. If he gets over that, perhaps he may come round; but he never can be strong. You know he has always suffered, more or less, in the winter.’

‘Poor fellow! how fond he was of this meeting, and such a capital shot. I think Hawkestone shot as well as you, Chesterton; and that’s a high compliment to pay him,’ remarks the Duke to Lord Chesterton.

‘I’m sure he did. I never saw a man shoot better than he did last year; he scarcely missed a bird. But no man can shoot these covers properly without being a pretty good shot.’

‘Yes—requires straight powder, and a mind at ease,’ said Markham, sententiously.

‘Then you had no fear of your Christmas bills,’ remarked Careless, ‘to-day.’

‘Not when I shot the woodcock,’ replied the other.

‘That’s good,’ said the party generally; ‘that’s when he wiped your eye, Frank.’

‘Light the billiard-room,’ said Harold, after ringing the bell, ‘and bring some more claret.’

And the following days were like the first; and at the end of the week the party broke up. The frost continued, so on the Saturday Harold Falcon took a hack out of the stables, and went over to Williamson, one of his uncle’s tenants, with whom he had business. Then he visited the kennels, where he found everything as it should be; and both hounds and horses the better for the rest they were having—the first break since the beginning of the season. Lady Helen’s school was less in his way than the kennels, but it was a labour he would not willingly have missed. So he went, and carried away the report which the rector gave him. He finished his commissions towards four in the afternoon, and cantered back to the Castle.

As he entered the stable-yard, and gave his hack to one of the grooms about, the butler came out to meet him, bearing a paper parcel shaped like a letter. There had lately been established on this line a telegraphic wire, the use of which

had been scarcely tested ; certainly never yet at the Castle. This was the letter, then, which had been sent from the station to Harold for immediate delivery. It had been in the house some hours, for the groom had no idea where Captain Falcon was gone when the messenger arrived at Hawkestone.

Harold opened it with fear and misgiving. 'Come as soon as you can, my brother is worse. From Lady Helen Falcon to Captain Falcon, Hawkestone Castle. Immediate.' And he had allowed all this time to elapse.

'Stephens !'

'Yes, sir.'

'Fetch me a railway time-table,' from which Harold discovered that he could get a train at seven p.m., which would get him to Egmont by eleven that night. He telegraphed to that effect, and having ordered the brougham at the proper time, waited patiently, but still with fear and trembling, as when he had received the paper.

He had plenty to employ his mind. If his fears were correct, he had lost a valuable friend, and gained, as he thought, a valueless inheritance.

When he reached Egmont, Lord Hawkestone had been dead an hour.

## CHAPTER XII.

HAROLD FALCON SETTLES SOME OF HIS COUSIN'S  
AFFAIRS.

HAWKESTONE had at least three sincere mourners: a fair number in a world as selfish as ours. I will not take upon myself to say that he had not many more. He ought to have had. George Fellowes, for instance, had lost a friend quite as much as a patron; for Harold Falcon had never pretended to feel the least regard for the young man personally, beyond the attempt to thwart his present career. The three undoubtedly sincere mourners over Hawkestone's grave were Lord Falconberg, Lady Helen, and Harold. The first was a man to feel this last blow very deeply. A variety of reasons, easily understood by his friends, made it especially severe. But Lord Falconberg was not a man to exhibit his feeling to the world. He believed it to be a duty to bear with fortitude the affliction from which, in his case, his rank and influence had not sheltered



him. Besides this he believed that his own depression could only increase that of his daughter; and Lady Helen, though somewhat like her father, had need of all the support his example could give her.

To Lady Helen the blow had come unexpectedly. She had a strong and hopeful mind (qualities which do not go always together); but not that patient strength which is a high characteristic of good women. These dare and do: and while daring and doing, have hope and strength; but their hopes are frustrated, and then they collapse; and the good women begin where the men have left off. Lady Helen clung very fondly to the brother she had just lost: and there was a reason for that too, which was known to nobody but herself. Confidence in such a woman as Lady Di was painful. She might have been all the better for talking about Lord Hawkestone to his sister, when there was a prospect of his marrying her. But Lady Helen would have been none the better for trusting her secrets to any female bosom but her own.

She did love her cousin Harold. She could not help it, as far as sorrow for his early misbehaviour and consequent troubles went. She would have then given him all she was worth, as

far as it was womanly and modest to do so. She now liked to have him near her: to know how dearly he loved her brother and father, and to feel how kind and considerate he always was to herself. Her love too was her own, and not a jealous love; nor a violent, nor a corroding love. She did not want him to marry elsewhere, unless it would have added to his happiness. Even then she could have dispensed with this mark of his indifference to her own affection. But she would have made his wife her friend and his children her pets. And now it added to her other sorrows, to think that a great link between them was gone.

Harold Falcon's own grief was genuine, and his reflections varied. The position he now held was so different from any that he could have expected to hold, when a boy. When at Eton nobody ever thought of him as the possible possessor of an earldom and its corresponding powers. One great advantage of our public schools is that he would have been thrashed just as much when he deserved it, possibly a little more; but the fact would have been none the less patent, and would have no less exercised its influence on his career: Harold in the Guards was a gentleman; so were they all: and he was

a gentleman, without any money, and with all the tastes which require money. His family was noble, but he was a long way from the enjoyment of the privileges of nobility. Five (as a money-lender once informed him) between him and the title, in calculating the chances, and four of them good lives. And yet here he was, not a young man, truly, but very far from an old one, heir to the title of Falconberg, and one of the finest properties in England.

Then a very vivid recollection of a youth somewhat misspent came upon him ; how much he had owed to Hawkestone's and his uncle's kindness, and, if they but knew all, how strangely he had requited them. To be sure, he had never contemplated the position, a dependent one, into which the early deaths of his cousins threw him. As his own master he might have acted foolishly, but he had wronged nobody. He could scarcely flatter himself with that conclusion now : and he discovered late in life that repentance was valuable as an exercise of the mind or a preventive, but inefficient for the annihilation of past follies. One subject gave him great regret. He, too, felt that a strong link between himself and his cousin Helen was gone ; and there were reasons, known only to himself, which made a con-

stant residence with his uncle more distasteful than heretofore. For the present, however, he was not called upon to make any decision in that respect. Lord Falconberg and Lady Helen went down to Hawkestone Castle and remained there ; and Harold stayed in Egmont with some business on hand for his uncle, connected with Lord Hawkestone.

Harold was no little sufferer in the midst of his reflections : he was like other people, always inclined to attribute present inconvenience to present misconduct ; never was a greater mistake. The punishment comes according to circumstances, in this world or the next, quickly or slowly : of one thing only we can be certain, that it will come surely.

‘ Then, Harold, you’ll go down to Newmarket,’ said Lord Falconberg, ‘ and see about the horses, and have the old mare kept here, unless you like to have her sent down to Hawkestone.’ This was said about six weeks after Lord Hawkestone’s death, when the old lord was spending a few days in town.

‘ Yes, I’ll see Littletop, and do as you wish about them. He wanted them sold after the last October meeting ; but the gentlemen had had a bad time of it, and there were so many studs in

the market, I persuaded him not to send them to the hammer.'

'You'll be down at Hawkestone before the summer, Harold—my dear boy, you must come, I can't get on at all without you, now.' And Harold Falcon knew well the value of that little 'now,' that it gave the force of a command to what might have been a suggestion. So he promised; 'and, Harold, as there must be a dissolution at the end of the session, you'll not make any objection "now"''—The cabalistic monosyllable again.

'Well, well, if you wish it.' And then old Lord Falconberg started for Hawkestone Castle, just as others were coming to town.

Harold went to Newmarket: where he found Mr Littletop the trainer. He might have also felt sorrow for Lord Hawkestone's death. Indeed he did; for as he justly and practically remarked, 'He's one of those few gentlemen that loves racin', not money. Consequently, he never interferes, and pays his trainer's bill regular.' And when Harold Falcon presented himself before the spruce, active, but rather stout little man, who was dressed in the height of the fashion, with only a trifle too much jewelry for any one but a prosperous jockey, which he had been be-

fore he grew stout, he was received with a civility which was due to something more than his expectations.

‘Well ! captain, I thought we should see you at Newmarket, now.’ This word ‘now’ seemed to have an equal prominence with Mr Littletop as in Lord Falconberg’s mouth. ‘Now !’ everybody would say ‘now ;’ and the reminiscences conjured up by it ought to have been agreeable, but they were not.

‘No ! I don’t feel much inclined to go on with them. There’s only one of them I should care about besides the mare ; and Lord Hawkestone’s wish was that she should be taken out of training, and sent to Egmont.’

‘And what do you propose to do with the other four ? The Hawk’s a good ’oss, sir ; might be made to win a good handicap or two, captain, if we keep him back long enough.’ This was perfectly true, but Harold Falcon did not view the horses with the favourable eyes of his trainer.

‘I propose to sell them, if I can get a customer. What are they worth, Littletop ?’

‘Good bit o’ money, sir. I should say the Hawk’s worth seven or eight hundred, and the rest would make a thousand between ’em,—near upon two thousand, I should say.’ Saying which

Mr Littletop picked a piece of a new shoot from the hedgerow, and began biting it, relapsing at the same time into silence.

‘Then you’d better sell ’em. See Mr Tattersall about them, and if any of the nominations stand good they must go subject to their engagements.’

In the Rutland Arms, in a comfortable room, in the mean time sat two gentlemen; one was smoking a cigar, and the other swallowing some of the best new bread, butter, and cheese that could be put before a man. He had been seeing his horses, and was lunching hastily, while he waited for his fly.

‘So you like the Hawk, Shanker, do you?’ Mr Shanker began life as a Scotch artisan in a Birmingham button manufactory, and had risen to great eminence by industry in his present profession, which was the suborning of jockeys, stable-boys, and occasionally their masters. He owned horses himself, but ran them under another name.

‘Yes, I do verra much; he’d be a serviceable horse to you, Sir Martin, if ye got him at the right figure, and put ’em into other hands.’ Sir Martin Gale was a young baronet, as green as he was young, and exactly the person that would have been serviceable to Mr Shanker.

‘But he never runs anywhere but second. He’s the most expensive horse a man can have. Just good enough to back, and never to win.’

Mr Shanker put his finger to his nose as he swallowed his last bit of bread and cheese. ‘Littletop knows his business; Lord Hawkestone was a gude master, and paid regular, whether he won or lost. There’s some in Littletop’s stable that must win, or they couldn’t pay at all. Buy the horse and put ’em into different company. Buy the lot, ye’ll get ’em cheaper, and I’ll take ’em in for ye. Send ’em to Nat Shifty in my name, he’s plenty o’ room. Eh, mon, there’s Lord North-down, hasn’t one that’s within a stone o’ t’ Hawk for a mile, wins half the handicaps in England, because he looks after it himself and puts ’em into the right company.’ With which Mr Shanker rang the bell and ordered his fly round, leaving Sir Martin Gale to think over the advice.

He did so to some purpose, and had a most prosperous season with the Hawk, which he bought with the rest of the stud. He’s now in Boulogne, having backed all Shanker’s horses and some of his bills. The latter, when the confederacy was broken up, proved to be a very unfortunate speculation. However, the legs will be



glad to hear that the inconvenience is only temporary.

‘I saw Falcon in Newmarket coming away from Littletop’s; I suppose he’ll begin again now on his own account,’ said Major Stapleton, a member of the jockey club, and just now the owner of a much-coveted two-thousand favourite, the best public runner out.

‘I think not,’ said Lord Belleisle, to whom the Major addressed himself; ‘the fact is, Falcon had such a time of it when he was in the Guards that it has taken all his life to forget it.’

‘What a quiet fellow he’s become. Wasn’t there some difficulty about money matters, with some of the Jews? Some mystery. He went abroad, and Hawkestone settled for him;’ and Major Stapleton wondered whether anybody would settle for *him* if he came to grief over the second spring meeting.

‘Yes, but Falcon found the money. I’ve heard Hawkestone say so many times. He put it beyond all dispute, and took good care to do so. There were so many stories afloat at the time, and it was so much talked about, that he made a point of contradicting anything like a suspicion of having helped him.’

‘The man that ruined him you don’t recollect,

a man called Jansen,' said Major Stapleton.

'On the contrary, my dear Stapleton, Harold Falcon told me that Jansen saved him, by finding a huge quantity of money at a moment's notice, I believe when poor Cranstone shot himself.'

'And heavily he paid for it, by a post obit on all the property he was to inherit from some old aunt. It cost him about five hundred per cent.'

'Not exactly, as he certainly lives on part of it now. The most I ever heard him say about the matter was that it cost him dear.'

'What was he doing at Littletop's to-day?' inquired Major Stapleton after a pause, during which he plunged into the Sporting Gazette.

'Most probably on business for Lord Falconberg about his cousin's horses. There's the Hawk, the horse that ran so well in the criterion, beaten by half a length, and two or three more,' replied Lord Belleisle; who, if he didn't know everything, was at least better up in Harold's affairs than Major Stapleton.

'I remember him, a nice horse, very. I'm off by this train, so Good-bye.'

And in it he had Harold Falcon for his companion, as well as Mr Shanker. They both recollected when there was no train to Newmarket,

and when few of Mr Shanker's class had ever been admitted into their society. It's wonderful how poverty and wealth assimilate in making us acquainted with strange bed-fellows.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## A STUDIO.

MR MCGILP lived in Newman-street, a dark dingy-looking street, yet not unfamiliar with Art. Art has its mysteries, and perhaps Newman-street is better acquainted with Art's mysteries than with Art itself. To a house therefore in this street, at this time, any one in search of that peculiar knowledge, or of George Fellowes, or of Mr McGilp, was likely to go. Harold Falcon was no patron of high art, nor of the dark and mysterious gentlemen connected with it, as in its infancy ; nor did he care about Mr McGilp ; but he found himself on the step of that great impostor's door a day or two after his return from New-market.

I suppose hundreds of artists and artist's homes have been described from Gandish and his pupils downwards. I say downwards, because modern literature finds itself incapable of going upwards from Thackeray. There is amongst writers a

conventional pattern for these sorts of characters pretty much alike, with just a difference in type, —German, Italian, English. All long-haired, bearded, moustachioed ; one red, the other black, the third brown. All dirty, eccentric, preternaturally solemn ; or jovial, beer-drinking, pipe-smoking, unkempt, uncorned ; getting their meals in a curious family-hog-tub fashion ; reconcilable only with a total forgetfulness of the decencies of plates, knives, forks, or table-cloths.

Then the writer begins to think he has gone a little too far ; but not liking to spoil the strong light and shade of the picture he has drawn, he proceeds to put on a varnish of sentimental virtue quite coincident with ethical turpitude. They don't pay their bills, these devil-may-care dogs, but they are always ready to help a sick friend. They are not remarkable for the social duties of husbands or fathers to their own wives and children, but they have a fund of affection to bestow upon the wives and children of other people, so that only they be good-looking. There are a great many dear Bessies left sitting at home, to the enjoyment of a lip-worship which they never hear, while dear Tom eats and drinks with nearer neighbours the gains that would be so acceptable at home. There is no denying great licence to

high art of every kind. Genius must have its fling.

‘Pictoribus atque Poetis

Quidlibet audendi semper fuit æqua potestas.’

Possibly Horace did not mean exactly what I do, but he was very near the mark; and the gentleman-poet of the Augustan age regarded metaphorical diet and eccentricity in much the same light.

When Harold Falcon reached Mr McGilp's academy he was shown up-stairs,—stairs, whose balustrades wound in and out with a line of beauty beyond Belgravian graces. Dainty curves and flowing lines led to a wide landing, on whose walls were Bacchanalian boys and wreaths, with fruits and flowers, choice specimens of the architectural beauties of William and Mary or Anne's reigns. Dust and dirt disfigured them, and here and there a limb was wanting in the bas-relief of plaster or composition; but the eye dwelt with pleasure upon ornament that accorded well with the refinements of its literature, but checked its severity. McGilp himself threw his simplicity into the balance. There he stood, mahl-stick in hand, under the barest of polls, closely shorn, his wig thrust into an old tweed shooting-jacket pocket, shouting to a slipshod wench to ‘show

the gentleman up,' and himself prepared to usher the stranger into his academy.

Harold introduced himself to the little painter, and followed the indications of a well-prepared palette. His steps were arrested on the very threshold by a wonderful canvas covered all over with dabs of every colour of the rainbow, and some negative tints which had never appeared in any rainbow at all. It was attractive enough to an unpractised eye.

'Ah! Captain Falcon, you'll be looking at our Turner.'

'A Turner!' said Harold in surprise.

'Weel, it's just a Turner that we've been making amongst us,' replied the practical man of the easel. 'It's a wee bit canvas that the boys tak' to cleaning their palettes as they go out, and we've just christened it a Turner. It's a gude enough specimen o' the great colourist, or will be sae in a week or twa.' To which explanation Harold replied with a laugh which scarcely expressed as much humour as the twinkle of Mr McGilp's eye. The occupants of the room made up for the master's unconventional appearance. Half-a-dozen pupils were sedulously at work, copying from the originals, or *quasi* originals, upon the walls, while in the centre was Mr

McGilp's own master-piece, a battle, whose white horses, scarlet coats, and cocked hats, clearly had reference to nothing later than Marlborough, and Blenheim, and Ramilies. On the walls were pinned divers sketches in chalk or crayons of torsos and busts, Centaurs and Lapithæ, antiques, and a continuation of the staircase in many colours. The Dutch school, too, was predominant among the youngsters. Scraps, too, of Wilkie caught the eye: while the more adventurous had made sketches of faces which English art engrafts on English experience. Why are we a great nation of portrait painters? Because we have originals of such beauty as no other country under the sun produces. Copies from Sir Godfrey Kneller, Gainsborough, and the playful childhood of Sir Joshua stood on easels or chairs, in a chaos that contrasted curiously with the unpoetical master who presided over the whole.

But the types of another school were there. The velvets and the hands of Vandyke, and the slouched hat and obtrusive colours of a Rubens were among the art pupils. There was the smell of the meerschaum, and the half-emptied pewter, without which beauty of form will not properly flourish, at least within the walls of a painter's



studio. A draped model, and a suit of Milanese armour, shared the lower end of the room between them.

‘Mr Fellowes? that’s his unfinished sketch of a Bacchanal ye’ll see, and it’s likely to be unfinished, if he’s not more diligent than he has been lately. Not that he wants talent, Captain Falcon; but there’s no stability of purpose to make a great artist. It’s just here to-day, and Sir Samuel to-morrow.’

‘Sir Samuel, Mr McGilp; do you mean Sir Samuel Cripplegate?’

‘Ay, it’s like enough. He tells me he’s a great patron o’ the arts; but I aye tell him it’s the Breetish public’s the best patron o’ merit. It’s better to show your work to a whole nation than to any one man. And though I’ll say nae-thing against a gude dinner once and again, a full stomach aye makes an empty cupboard, Captain Falcon.’ The captain might have been of Mr McGilp’s opinion too, but he said nothing for a minute or two: and after ascertaining that George Fellowes was a great deal more at Sir Samuel Cripplegate’s than with the hard-working little painter in Newman-street, Harold Falcon took his leave.

The captain’s reflections as he walked up

Oxford-street were simple enough, and possibly borne out by the facts of the case ; and while he sauntered down to the clubs, to read the papers and talk over the chances of the Two Thousand, and the late season's sport in the shires, we must adjourn to some chambers in the Temple, to visit his cousin George, whom we have scarcely seen or heard of since he left Oxford.

George Falcon was much changed ; changed, not as men change with years, by his beard, or his hair, or his wrinkles, but changed altogether. To say that he had had an anxious time of it is not true. His anxieties must have been his own, and were at least independent of his public career. In that he had succeeded ; for, as his inclination had pointed only to the acquisition of money, and he had always made a thousand a-year more than he liked to spend, his wish was gratified. As a young man he had been devoid of ambition ; but he had been clever and industrious in his way, humorous, and a good companion at times ; and certainly smart-looking and well got up. Intensely selfish he always was, and he worked his friends in the manner to procure his own enjoyment at as little cost as possible. Not an amiable or respectable character, you will say. No ; but there were plenty who liked him, for all that ;

and who took the gilt without looking at the quality of the gingerbread which it concealed.

In his profession, the law, he was just the man to succeed to a certain point; and he had worked hard, not to the gallery, but for substantial profits. He numbered amongst his friends a large number of solicitors and attorneys, and neglected nothing that could bring grist to the mill. He knew that keeping up his own connections would be a waste of time and money, while the making of new ones would be precisely the reverse. Of Harold and Lord Falconberg, therefore, he saw but little, perhaps to the great regret of neither. The former was not so imbued with parental charity as to take much trouble about him; the latter had offered him many civilities and much hospitality, till even his *bon-homme* was reduced to a formal dinner or two during the season.

So much was he changed since he dressed himself to go courting Peggy Jansen at Woodstock, that it would have been impossible to have recognized the smart, well-made figure of former days, in the careless, almost dirty costume in which we now discover him, up three flight of stairs in Pump Court. There are men who, to the end of their days, retain just that amount of

dandyism which shows their appreciation of good dressing to have been always the effect of a liberal and good cause: dependent neither on youth, nor money, nor love for self, nor even for one other person—but part of their nature, like any other virtue, and as necessary in a primeval forest as in the High-street, Oxford, or Rotten-row. This cause we call self-respect: and George Falcon had none of it. This is why he became a sloven as well as a misanthrope, when he took to money-making.

But others said there was a cause for all this: that it was not all law, nor all avarice. He had a secret sorrow, like his cousin Harold—I can say this: he bore it very differently. While every eye was looking at the ex-Guardsman, as he walked down St James'-street, and men and women said, What a handsome fellow that Captain Falcon is—he's fit to supply Hawkestone's place, when the old earl goes; George lounged in a small and dusty chamber, up three flights of rickety stairs. His old dressing-gown covered a loose and shabby pair of trowsers, whose pockets were torn and worn at the corners with frequent use, forensically and pecuniarily. For nothing gives so commanding an air to impromptu eloquence as a hand in the pocket, ready for use as

occasion shall direct. How changed in shape and nature from those boots and trowsers in which we have once before beheld him ! Surely the strike among the tailors must have begun earlier than I imagined : and, to look at his misshapen high-lows, must have extended itself to the boot-makers too ! Be that as it may, there he sat, smoking a dingy old pipe, with unkempt locks, ever and anon making extracts from a black-letter book that lay on the table beside him.

He had just closed the mysterious volume from which he had been reading and writing, and was refreshing himself with a turn in some such light author as Wheaton's International Law, to see what prospect there might be of war with our transatlantic brothers, when a knock at his door startled him sufficiently to attract his attention. ' Come in,' said he—hoping an attorney ; and he was right.

The attorney who entered was one Mr Dryden, a man of large and good practice. Not more honest than others, nor a greater rogue. But he was penetrating and shrewd,—and as he was said to know a thing or two that he ought not to have known, men sometimes said he was a rascal. But as he never was known to divulge his knowledge excepting for very handsome considera-

tions, he was quite as prudent as, and not much worse than, the rest of the world. At present he unfolded his business in a very satisfactory manner, and without much circumlocution.

‘George Falcon, give me half-an-hour’s chat, if you can spare the time,’ and the lawyer laid his hat on one side and brushed up some iron-grey stubborn-looking hair with his hand. He was a fine, tall, and very handsome man, with nothing astute about his appearance. He had a disagreeable expression sometimes about his mouth, which he drew down at the corners when not quite satisfied. ‘I can spare the time, Dryden, if there’s anything like business to be done—if not, I’ll come and dine with you some day, soon.’

Mr Dryden’s mouth went down at the corners; but he smiled notwithstanding.

‘You can’t dine with me, as I am about to leave town; and it depends entirely upon circumstances what is to be got out of the business.’ The lawyer knew his friend’s weakness.

‘Am I interested personally, or likely to be so?’

‘That depends also upon how far your sympathies extend beyond yourself.’

George Falcon laughed. ‘My sympathies

are like yours, Dryden, I expect, and those of other people:—for yourself first, for others if there's anything to be got out of them collaterally; and not averse to do a good action in preference to a bad one, when the risk or profit is nil or equal.'

'Is that the world you live in, or a creed you've adopted for convenience?'

'It's a creed I've adopted to conceal my real affection for the world I live in.'

'It's used you well, Falcon, at all events,' said Mr Dryden with some sincerity.

'Has it? that's a matter of opinion, my good friend. You have: but every man knows his own troubles best. Now let's have your story—what do you want?'

Mr Dryden looked at him with his peculiar sneer, almost imperceptible, and inquired in a dry tone, whether he knew his cousin Harold, the captain.

'Yes, I do; but that doesn't interest me. I remember when he used to borrow money of me.' Here he stretched himself out in his chair, and putting both hands into his old pockets prepared to listen as though he might be taken at a disadvantage again.

'He's not likely to do so any more; though,

I take it, he's borrowed a great deal more since, than you'll ever be willing to lend him. It wasn't to help him to do that that I came here. I want to tell you something about him, which you ought to know, though I doubt you won't give much for the intelligence; but I shall not ask for anything, so be comforted.' All this was said with much gravity, but a tone of banter, and George Falcon replied in the same indolent voice,—

‘Then, as it costs nothing, let's hear it,’—and he heard it, in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER XIV.

## RATHER IMPORTANT.

GEORGE FALCON threw himself back in his easy-chair, after refilling an old pipe, and lighting it, with all the indifference of a man who never expected to hear much to his own advantage, except from his own efforts; while Dryden, the older man of the two, sat bolt upright, with an air as of one conscious of having something to communicate, and much in accordance with his personal appearance.

‘You don’t object to smoke?’ said Falcon.

‘Not in other people’s houses,’ replied the solicitor, who for a solicitor treated the barrister, for a barrister, with very little respect.

‘Ah! I forgot, there’s a Mrs Dryden, it is easy to see.’

‘And it’s easy to see there’s no Mrs Falcon,’ replied Dryden, cheerfully; at which remark, one which, by-the-by, he must have heard some

hundreds of times, George Falcon looked rather foolish, and went on with his pipe.

‘You knew your cousin Harold very well formerly, didn’t you, Falcon—I mean years ago, when he was in the Guards?’

‘Very; he was intimate enough with me to borrow money, so you can imagine how well we knew one another.’

‘And he always repaid it?’ inquired Mr Dryden.

‘Undoubtedly:’—here Falcon sat upright for a minute, but finding nothing come of this question he relapsed again.

‘Then you’ve nothing to complain of; and ought to like him.’

‘Nothing, whatever, and I do like him; that is, as well as I like any of my relations. He has the character of being a good fellow.’

‘Which means a very improvident one. He was fast.’

‘Very. Faster than this cock-and-bull story which I’m waiting for by a great many degrees. You haven’t a stop watch in your pocket, have you?’

‘No; why?’ inquired the solicitor, rather solemnly.

‘Because I thought you had, and that it affected your speech.’

‘Nonsense. Tell me what Harold Falcon did.’

‘Ask what he didn’t do. Played, raced, hunted, lived with—’

‘As men usually do, you would say.’

‘Indeed I was not going to say anything of the sort. I was going to say, with the fastest men in town; at Newmarket, or at Crocky’s, or at Melton, as regularly as codfish, salmon, or turbot were to be seen upon a table.’

‘And there was no question of—well—of a lady in the case.’

Again George Falcon raised himself, apparently endeavouring to recollect something to his cousin’s disadvantage; but in a minute or two he replied, ‘None whatever. It’s a common enough cause of ruin, I know, Dryden; particularly with good-looking fellows like Harold and yourself: but he came to grief entirely from gambling. I don’t think his personal extravagance had much to do with it, though he was as indifferent about money as I am about cock-fighting,’ with which simile George Falcon relapsed again.

‘Didn’t he go abroad, or live abroad, a great deal?’

‘Not till Lord Cranstone’s death obliged him. He owed him a few thousands more than either could have paid; and instead of going to Tattersall’s to settle, he settled at home by shooting himself.’

‘Then, do you mean to say that Captain Falcon was a defaulter?’

‘Not a bit of it; he’s not at all the sort of fellow. He’d rather have followed Cranstone, though he couldn’t have got the money out of him. He borrowed the money, Heaven knows how! from a man called Jansen, and my cousin, Lord Hawkestone, settled his book. I remember it as well as if it was yesterday.’

‘Did you say Jansen? It’s a singular name. You knew him, I suppose?’

‘Not exactly. It is a singular name; it’s Dutch.’

‘Or German?’

‘No; Dutch, I tell you.’ And either from temper at the contradiction, which was very unlike him, or some other cause unknown to Dryden, George Falcon blushed deeply, and busied himself on his pipe. ‘I knew him well by name, and have often heard him spoken of by those who knew him better.’

‘Did you ever hear that he had a daughter?’

Notwithstanding his apparent indifference, George Falcon could not help sitting up now, and saying with some irritation,

‘What the devil can you want to know about his daughter? What can it signify to you or to me?’

The corners of Mr Dryden’s mouth went down considerably as he said, ‘I don’t know about me, but it may signify to you. Your cousin Harold is the heir to the old earl.’

‘I know it. Marvellous luck, wasn’t it?’

‘And you are the next to him,’ said the lawyer, disregarding the interruption.

‘I haven’t forgotten it. I wonder what it’s worth in a life-insurance office?’

‘Did Harold Falcon ever go to Nuremberg?’

‘How can I possibly tell that now?’ and George seemed to have recovered his carelessness of the whole affair.

‘Do you know that he did not?’ said Dryden, who got more eager every minute.

‘I know nothing about it,’ said old Surly, as he was occasionally called by old chums who had known him in his University days.

‘Then I’ll enlighten you,’ said the other.

‘Do so, and be quick about it, for I’ve a con-

sultation at midnight, and it seems to me your story will last till then or beyond it.'

'Captain Falcon went to Nuremberg with Jansen's daughter, and married her.'

Mr George began to think it did affect him. He looked so astonished that he found no breath to make any remark on the subject for a few minutes. At last he found a tongue, and it prompted him instinctively. 'Has he any family—a son and heir?' This was spoken with some degree of banter, for he certainly didn't believe the story.

'It's said that he has; at least, a son born after his marriage, and therefore legally his, and consequently heir to the title.'

George Falcon was wide enough awake now; and the revelation was sufficiently startling, it must be admitted. He sat for a minute or two. His face had lost the careless expression that it had assumed, and with some difficulty maintained. He laid his pipe upon the table, and said at length, 'And you know all this, Dryden? As I am an interested party, perhaps you will tell me how?'

'Certainly, if you think the subject sufficiently important to pursue. I had occasion to go to Nuremberg—not on any business connected with

your family—but to ascertain a fact relative to another client, by which I obtained access to the archives of the old city.’

‘More lucrative than interesting,’ said George Falcon, thinking he ought to say something.

‘That’s as may be. In the present case, perhaps, it was so. In looking over them it was necessary to refer to some old marriage registers, which, it seems, after a certain date, it is customary to send there for security. You know that the connection I have formed with your family is sufficiently close to warrant some surprise in seeing that name so far from England and under such peculiar circumstances. I therefore asked permission to look at the document in question. We lawyers have a sort of freemasonry all over the world, and my conductor, an *avocat*, who guarded these sacred treasures, not only allowed me to inspect the name more closely, but as it was written in German, he did me the still greater favour of translating it. I have copied it, and the translation was the registration of the marriage itself.’

During this very intelligible narrative, it is not too much to say that the auditor’s face assumed two or three different colours and forms of expression. As soon as his surprise had some-

what subsided, incredulity followed, and a rather pale sort of smile, so to speak, lit up, or rather threw its shadow over, the barrister's countenance. This expression gave place to one of meditation, and then a frown or two wrinkled his forehead, and brought back its natural colour with his natural occupation. The only sign of a nervousness which was really considerable, was observable in the demolition of a quill pen which he took from the table. By the time Dryden had reached this point of his story all the feathers were stripped off, and the quill uselessly split up in every direction.

‘Do you mean that you obtained a copy of that document from an intelligent and trustworthy person?’

‘He was intelligent enough, I have said, to be an *avocat*; and those German lawyers are not without brains or education. I know nothing of their honesty; but they must equal our own in that respect. Herr Krümmacher was trustworthy enough to be placed in a somewhat responsible official situation.’

‘Have you been long in possession of this family mystery?’

‘Some little time; as I had to finish my researches in Nuremberg, and only returned to England the day before yesterday.’



‘And is this *fact*,’ and George Falcon laid some stress upon the word, ‘known to Lord Falconberg?’

‘Ah, that I can’t tell. Certainly it ought to be;’ Dryden paused: ‘but—’

‘Yes, it ought to be. If you’re convinced, why hesitate?’ and George Falcon spoke as if, though the earl couldn’t direct the title or estates in favour of the next of kin after Harold, at least he might make a different disposition of the money, which report asserted he had at his own disposal.

‘Because if he knows it already, which you see is quite possible, I should say, from your cousin’s character, even probable, I shall be in the position of the gentleman who had found a mare’s nest, and if not I should certainly not like to be the one to tell him of it.’ He didn’t think that the duty would devolve upon him, and would prove more disagreeable than he imagined.

‘And did you make any further confirmatory inquiries?’ said George Falcon, who was seriously impressed by the lawyer’s manifest conviction.

‘A few, very confirmatory they were. I saw the clergyman who performed the ceremony, and found that unless there were two Harold Falcons your cousin was undoubtedly married some twenty years ago, with the rites and ceremonies belong-

ing to the German Protestant Church. As to Jansen's daughter, there's no doubt about the lady, who has relations in Nuremberg, where she was born. The pasteur, who has an eye for female beauty, gave a glowing description of her charms.'

'And is he as intelligent and trustworthy as the *avocat* ?'

'He's not above sixty years of age now, in full possession of his faculties.'

'Of which his memory is not perhaps the least extraordinary.'

'Well, I should think so, for he added some particulars with which report had made him familiar,' replied Mr Dryden, by no means put out by the peculiarity of George Falcon's method of cross-examination.

'About the son and heir to the Falconberg estates, I suppose ?'

'About the son and heir undoubtedly, if what he said was true, and that is capable of proof or refutation. Thus far I may tell you, that there is irrefutable evidence that although these two people are said never to have lived together, but to have parted almost at the church door, a son was born to Mr Harold Falcon some few months after marriage, which your cousin may repudiate, but which the law will assign to him as the heir

to his future title and estates, the future Earl of Falconberg, in the natural course of things.'

'And you believe all that?'

'I do.'

'I don't,' said the other. 'Do you suppose these people would have allowed Harold to live thus long without pursuing their claim upon him? Do you know friend Jansen or his daughter? What! after the death of Lord Hawkestone, heir to an earl with about thirty thousand a-year: shame, say you? Do you know of any shame that isn't covered by a title and such a position! If he'd been bred on a dunghill, my good fellow, there's not a man or woman of their boasted ten thousand who wouldn't welcome him and her too if there was anything to be got by it. Shame! bless your guileless heart, Dryden,—there's no shame in the world but poverty. What do you suppose I've been struggling for all my life?'

'Oh, you fellows live up three flights of stairs and think you see the world in a court of law. You know a little of the worst side of it. At all events, these people, Jansen and his daughter, have allowed Captain Falcon to live without molestation up to this time; nor is it at all clear that they have the least idea who he is. At the time of this supposed marriage he was worse than poor,

for he owed a great deal of money. Jansen himself must have known that as well as most people, for he borrowed a great deal from him to pay his gambling debts. Now if his cousins were not dead, there were four young lives between him and the title. It's excusable if a Dutch boor did forget to ascertain his exact status in society, or his chances of a coronet.'

'The shortest-sighted people are long enough sighted when their own interest is concerned.'

'As a general proposition I agree with you. But as long-sighted people in the dark are no better off than the blind—scarcely so well—and as I really think they were in the dark as to Captain Falcon's position, I retain my opinion.' The truth is, Dryden had very good reason for his opinion, or he would not have given it.

'Now tell me, Dryden, what was your particular object in this disclosure?'

'Well, I will. I've had very little communication with Captain Falcon for some years past. He has acted as your uncle's agent, and has usually sought for advice elsewhere. We've had no quarrel, but we've had little intercourse. I had no wish, nor indeed any business, to carry this intelligence to Lord Falconberg; and I don't know that I should do him a service were I to

tell him. I've brought it to you. Make the most of it.' And the lawyer for the first time during the conversation sat back in his arm-chair and folded his hands in comfort, not in slumber.

'The way for me to make the most of it is to make the least of it. It can be no advantage to me to find out that there's one more life, and that a young and possibly a good one, between me and the title. Besides, I may marry, what's to prevent me?' And it must be admitted that George Falcon's colour rose so high at this point, and his voice was so defiant, as to make it probable that he meant to do so. At all events, the family lawyer thought it right to soothe him.

'Nothing in the world; why not? Whether you have the estate or not, you need not, I presume, hesitate on the score of income.'

'Or suppose I were married?' he took no notice of his friend's answer. 'I don't want to bring home to Hawkestone Castle an almost insurmountable obstacle to my succession.'

As Dryden stared, somewhat astonished at what sounded like an admission, he said nothing. 'I think it's just as likely that I should have been clandestinely married as Harold.'

'Just as possible, you mean. But as we've no proof, you see—'

‘Well, there are no proofs as yet of the other,’ said George Falcon abruptly; ‘when there are it will be time enough for us to talk about an heir to the Falconberg property; just now it strikes me as premature to canvass the matter. The thing’s safe with me, and I think might remain so with you. On second thoughts, I should say nothing about it.’ Shortly after which the lawyer made his way once more down those dirty, rickety, narrow stairs, almost at the risk of his neck.

Mr Dryden was scarcely beyond the precincts of the Temple before an extraordinary change had taken place in the conduct of his late companion.

George Falcon rose, looked at himself in the glass, pushed his hair off his forehead, and seemed tolerably well satisfied with the scrutiny. He saw no material change in his appearance. His colour was never high, his eye seldom bright, but it was no less so than usual. Then he proceeded to fill another pipe, and having done so, he walked into his dressing-room, and plunged his face and head into cold water. Returning, he lighted his pipe, and smoking violently, he paced his apartment with quick steps to and fro till his pipe was out. Upon which he resumed his seat.

During that time he had gone twenty years back. He had become suddenly twenty years younger. He was again an under-graduate ; he had Beauchamp and his other friends with him. He saw Harold as he was—bold, generous, reckless about money, indifferent to censure or praise ; likely to sacrifice himself for a woman ; not incapable of dragging down his family, or anybody else, for his gratification. He saw himself, too, better than he was now ; impulsive, poetical as far as women were concerned ; hard and practical in money matters, because he was then clever enough to estimate its real value—the value which the market, the world, set upon it. He was again at Woodstock with Margaret Jansen ; and he appreciated her beauty and her attractions to himself at the estimation in which he then held them. Then he got older again. He reviewed his position ; his professional career ; the steady, hard-working, profitable career he had so industriously, so successfully followed.

‘ Now,’ said he to himself, ‘ is this true—is he married ? Well, possibly ; not probably. Has he a son legally heir to his honours and his wealth ? Margaret Jansen’s son ! will he be Lord Falconberg’s heir ? The presumption is that he must be, if Dryden’s story be true. If not, will



not Harold marry elsewhere—his cousin, Lady Helen? Why not? and with a family, what would the insurance offices, or those reckless Jews, give for my chance of the succession?’ Verily, he had plenty to think about. In the mean time law was a certainty, whatever marriage and inheritance might be; so he set to work on a very dry case, and strove to interest himself in it, with very bad success. Then he jumped up again. ‘Where the deuce was this boy, if he existed? and what had become of the family of Jansen? What a fool he was to have forgotten to ask the question.’

Lawyer Dryden, too, was so engaged with his own thoughts that, on emerging from the Temple, he ran up against the flourishing editor of a daily paper in Fleet-street, and was nearly run over at Temple Bar, before he collected his thoughts into any form whatever. They ended, however, before he reached the Strand, by assuming a shape somewhat of the following kind. ‘I’ve not told him more than two-thirds of what I know; and, luckily, he never asked me. I know that the boy is in London at this time. I have traced the Jansens, and when I want the information have a fair opportunity of acquiring it. He knows nothing of Harold or of this affair. That’s clear.



Whether Lord Falconberg knows it, or ought to know it, is another question. That will keep. I don't want to bell the cat myself.' When he reached his chambers a client was waiting for him. Sir Samuel Cripplegate was in his room.

## CHAPTER XV.

SIR SAMUEL CRIPPLEGATE was in great form. From head to foot he was smart, brisk, cheerful. Thoroughly well got up, in a fashion as much approaching the country gentleman as his preconceived notion of the character permitted. And considering the disadvantages under which he laboured, it was far from bad. His hat had acquired an additional nail's breadth in the brim ; his hair was closely clipped all round, and stood on end after the fashion of a wire-haired terrier ; his whiskers were the same, and were elaborately cut evenly in line with his collars. His whole countenance had a look of the water-brush, and he was manifestly in prime good humour with himself and everybody else. It was this Quixotic notion of finding a sympathizer in his contentment, which sent him on a visit to his friend and adviser, Lawyer Dryden. Lady Cripplegate was scarcely the person to enter into Sir Samuel's present pleasurable state of excitement ; and as

to Isabella—well, she would have done so ; for she had a great deal more of her father about her than of her mother ; but it happened that she hadn't been offered the opportunity.

‘ Ah ! Sir Samuel ; you here ? ’ and Mr Dryden hung his hat upon a peg on the wall of his ante-chamber, and walked into the inner room of his very comfortable chambers in Regent-street.

‘ Well, yes ; we've just come up to town for a week or two : and as my Missus—Lady, I should say—and Miss Isabella have taken theirselves off, I'm come to have ten minutes' chat,’ saying which Sir Samuel rubbed his hands, and entered eagerly upon consols, reform, the city police, capital punishment, the tailors' strike, and half-a-dozen other subjects, with as much acumen as if he had pronounced all his aspirates, and had the education of George Falcon himself. The old gentleman was shrewd enough, and a communicative and pleasant companion when he descended from the high horse, which he liked riding since his elevation to what he was pleased to call the ‘ hupper ten thousand.’

‘ So you like your new property, Sir Samuel ; plenty of society ? ’

‘ Yes, yes,’ replied he, with more confidence than he could have done before the winter.

‘Yes, yes ; well enough for that—all pleasant and hamicable. Neighbourhood ? ah ! well, that’s pretty good, I should say ; wants a little drafting, as they say in the ’unting field.’ And here Dryden opened his eyes to a new phase of his character. ‘There’s your City men ; well, I’m one o’ them myself, Dryden, so it won’t do to speak ill o’ them. Besides, they’re well enough in their way ; but there’s one or two who’s been in trade, who are in trade now, and my Miss—Lady’—he had scarcely managed to get over an inveterate habit of some twenty years in a few weeks—‘won’t have ’em at all. Between ourselves, Dryden, it’s all d—d nonsense, you know. If a fellow has plenty of tin, and—’

‘Education,’ suggested Dryden, slowly and dryly, with a drawing down of the corners of his eloquent mouth.

‘Education ? lor, no ; that’s all moonshine. I meant to say brass ;—he can do anything.’ And the newly-made knight put his hand in his pocket, and turned over his loose silver with a cheerful and self-satisfied smile.

‘I dare say the two together would put him on his mettle ; but don’t you think it wants some education ?’

‘Not a bit of it. I never had a hap’worth of

education. I just went to a dame's school, between you and me and the post, where I learnt a little ciphering and writing, and came up to London, and went into business in the City; and now I've got money, and titles, and education, and society, and everything.' He might have quoted Horace upon the subject, had he known how. 'And I'll tell you how it's done. Take to fox-hunting, my boy, and you may go into the society of any duke in the land.'

As Dryden knew something of some of the dukes of the land, and a great deal of Sir Samuel Cripplegate, he was obliged to accept this eccentric proposition with some exceptions. 'I'm glad you found it so.'

'Bless your soul, sir, every house in the county open to me at once. 'Unting's the 'inge to 'ang your gate on, you may depend, Dryden. When I first went to Egmont nobody—nobody of any consequence called. Of course, your butchers, and bakers, and candlestick-makers, they left their cards fast enough; but my Lady wasn't going to stand that, you know, though I think it's the duty of the squire of the place to keep up a friendly feeling in the village. Well, this wouldn't do, at any price, and we couldn't make it out. Some called, to be sure, and asked

us once to dinner ; but they wouldn't come to us.'

'How disinterested society must be in your neighbourhood, Sir Samuel.'

'I don't know about that. I think they wanted something when they asked us to dine with them. By some mistake or other, just because I wanted pheasants, my keeper goes and kills foxes.'

'Ah ! that's rather an awkward mistake to make in ——shire,' said the lawyer.

'So it is ; but my doctor's a capital fellow—first-rate, I can tell you—lives at a very pretty place, and has put by a good bit o' money. Well, he's one o' your fox-hunting doctors ; and we got talking about the neighbourhood, and says he to me, "If I was you I'd go to the meeting next Thursday." What meeting ? says I. "The county 'ounds," says he. "Everybody'd like to see you there, and I'll put it all right. Do the thing that's right—preserve the foxes—and give 'em a hundred pounds, and d—m-me, Sir Samuel, you'll have your house as full of dukes in a month as the hounds is full o' ticks.'"'

'Your doctor's a man of the world—a clever man, Sir Samuel, take my word for it.'

'By Jove, sir, he was right. I went to the meeting, I promised to preserve the foxes, I put

my name down for two hundred pounds, and lor' bless you, I know all the nobs, and the nobs know me—and if I wanted to start for the county to-morrow —'

'You'd have to take the hounds and keep 'em,' said Dryden, laughing.

'Well, I shalln't do that; but I told 'em they were welcome to the use of my dog Snap; and I'd bring him with me to join the hunt the first time they came my way next season.' The lawyer, who knew something of hunting as well as of dukes, sat with a wonderful stare on his countenance, and then looked as if he were choking. 'They laughed at this, and seemed to enjoy it amazingly. He's an uncommon good dog, I can tell you; for when the keeper caught master Renard in a trap in one of my covers, Snap went in at him like a bull-dog, and nearly killed him single-handed.'

'You didn't mention this at the meeting?' said Dryden, somewhat alarmed.

'No: I didn't say anything about that.'

'It's as well not to; or some of the dukes you mention mightn't like to come to a house where so savage an animal was kept. I should keep that dark. Did you go out yourself, before the close of the season?' inquired the lawyer, again, almost in convulsions.

‘No, I didn’t. But I sent out young George Fellowes on one of the carriage horses, and we weren’t able to drive him again for about ten days. Ah! you must come and see young Fellowes. He’s an uncommon clever young fellow; one of the most intelligent hartists I ever met with.’

‘And where did you pick him up, Sir Samuel?’

‘To tell you the truth, I don’t know much about him. Now, you know every one; and I dare say, Dryden, you wouldn’t mind finding out what you can about this young man for me.’

‘What clue can you give me? Tell me all you know.’ Dryden was very willing to serve Sir Samuel, not only because he was a good client, but because he owed him something, for a good turn or two that Sir Samuel had done him in the way of city business. Dryden was not a rich man, and a little city gambling helped him to support a rather large and extravagant family.

‘He’s a friend of Lord Falconberg’s, I met him there.’ This was a good strong assertion, very wide of the truth; but the name served Sir Samuel’s purpose rather better even than he expected, for Dryden felt an interest in the business



at once, quite independent of the rank of the gentleman mentioned.

‘ Lord Falconberg’s ? ’

‘ That is, of Captain Falcon’s—he’s a house in our village.’

‘ And what’s the name ? ’

‘ George Fellowes. He’s a hartist, as I said before: and he’s been a great deal at the ’all. He paints in Bella’s album, and he’s made some beautiful sketches for me. They’ll be worth money some o’ these days. Lord Hawkestone brought him over from Germany, and since his death Captain Falcon’s taken to patronizing him. Now he’s away, and let his house, and he’s often down with us from Saturday till Monday. But you see, we don’t know much about him; and as Bella and he are much of an age, though they’re both of ’em young enough—’

‘ Just so. I see, perfectly. You’d like to ascertain who this young man is—naturally—before you give him too much encouragement. You’re a wise man, Sir Samuel. There’s a great deal of unintentional mischief done before one knows anything about it. Now, is that literally all you know about this George ——, what did you say ? ’

‘ Fellowes—George Fellowes,’ and Sir Samuel

took up his hat and proceeded to take leave, when the lawyer once more stopped him.

‘By the way, you had better give me his address in London.’

‘His address—I really—now, that’s absurd enough. I don’t know his address, but it can easily be found. He’s with McGilp as a pupil.’

‘What, McGilp the artist? Oh, then, I’ll see about it for you. I dare say we shall soon be able to satisfy your doubts.’ And, to tell the truth, the lawyer had some doubts of his own, though very few, which he meant satisfying at the same time. Just then the door opened again, and Sir Samuel put in a rosy, but mysterious face at the door. ‘And, Dryden, my good fellow, not a word to Lady Cripplegate about the meeting, and the two hundred pound subscription, on any account.’

Not very long after Mr Dryden called upon McGilp. Whether the normal condition of Mr McGilp was to stand at the top of his staircase flourishing his mahl-stick and without his wig, or whether the increasing heat of the weather impelled him to that condition, I cannot tell; but he was discovered by Dryden in precisely the same state as he had been found by Captain Falcon some little time before. Dryden’s time

being valuable, he lost none of it in telling the bald-headed little Scotchman that he should be glad for a few minutes' conversation with him on a matter of business.

McGilp's idea of business was painting. It did not go much beyond chiaro-oscuro, high lights, shades, scumbling, glazing, and such matters. He paid his rent pretty regularly, and looked sharp after his pupils' salaries, but he didn't exactly know how he got into his house; and as to water-rates, poor's-rates, paving and lighting, he was as much in the dark as if he had been asked to define a compound-householder. When, therefore, Mr Dryden spoke of business McGilp ushered him straight into the painting-room. He had the great advantage of seeing the Turner in an advanced stage of colouring; the same half-emptied pot of porter, and the remains of the mutton-chops, early dinners of the velvet-coated, love-locked young artists, who thronged the room. McGilp could not conceive of cleanliness and genius under the same exterior.

It was needful that Mr Dryden should explain the nature of his communication, as requiring a greater amount of privacy than he met with among the Vandykes, Cuyps, Holbeins, broken victuals,

and damaged models of this rough-and-ready school: and he said so. The consequence was that he was accommodated with a rickety chair in a bed-room, the great master, follower and fellow-countryman of David Wilkie, taking his seat on a truckle bedstead in the same room. If the truth must be told, Mrs McGilp was ironing her husband's shirts in the only unoccupied room belonging to the family.

'Now, Mr McGilp,' said the lawyer, with as unconcerned a face and manner as he could assume, 'I think you have a pupil, a young gentleman by the name of Fellowes—George Fellowes.' Mr McGilp assented.

'A very promising young man, I'm told?'

'It's vera easy to promise: and I'm thinking he'll find it easier than to perform.'

'Ah! I had heard from some friends of mine that he had much talent.'

'The chiel's well enough, if they'd let 'em alone; but he's been under my tuition long enough to be better. He's ower-much sought after of fine folk.'

'That's bad. I think he came to you from abroad?'

'Well, he just came from Egmont, from some great laird. The Captain's been to see him here;

but he's mair friends than brains, I'm thinking.' This was not quite the point at which Dryden wished to arrivè, so he put the next question in unmistakable language.

'I mean he came from abroad to pursue his studies in art in this country?'

'Then he came to do what he'd better begin to do soon, for he hasn't commenced yet,' replied McGilp; and as Dryden was one of those men who persuaded himself that every man desired to deceive unless he had some palpable motive for speaking the truth, he set down McGilp's touch of national humour to over-caution. For a few moments he was at a loss how to proceed. At length he said, 'I suppose, as he came from Germany, he brought with him something of the mannerism of the German or Dutch school?' Dryden had not the slightest idea of the subject on which he was talking; but he felt obliged to say something, and it certainly was an ingenious mode of introducing Germany.

'Ech, sir, there's a wide difference between the twa schools, I'm thinking,' said McGilp, plunging at once, *con amore*, into the painting part of the question, without any reference to the other and only important part of it, in Dryden's estimation; 'and as to any knowledge he brought

with him, he's kept it to himself.' From which point the Scotch painter fell foul, first of the German, then of the Dutch, and lastly of his own school, declaring that the only thing that the English had ever painted decently were landscapes and portraits; and that good historical pictures or animals were only to be met with in exceptional cases: ending, however, just as Dryden was drawing down the sides of his mouth in hopeless despair of getting in a word, by saying, 'And if he ever wants to learn the true principles of his art he'd better go back again to my old friend Bernhard Jansen, and get a little of his energy and taste.'

'Bernhard Jansen!' repeated Dryden, with well-assumed surprise, as if this was the first time such a name had ever been heard of. 'Ah! a great artist, is he?'

'He's just Maister Fellowes' grandfather. He was a vera old friend o' mine, and a vera imprudent one, always turning his hand to this thing or that; but he knew more about art than half of your Royal Academicians in this country or any other.'

'And where, may I ask, Mr McGilp, is the residence of this gentleman, who deserves such high praise at your hands?'

'He was born in Amsterdam. He lived in

Nuremberg, where he learnt the art of carving in wood. He came to London, where he was a picture-dealer, old curiosity manufacturer, money-lender, and swindler in general, and retired to the neighbourhood of Cleves, where he lives with his daughter. He sent his grandson to me; but for any good he's likely to do here he'd better have kept him at home.'

'You haven't formed a high opinion of the young man, then?'

'He's well enough to look at, and to speak to; but he's no taste for hard work. He's taken to writing for the booksellers, who don't pay him; and he's always wasting his time at Sir Samuel Somebody's at Egmont. He's a likely callant for a young lassie to fancy; but I never had time to fall in love when I was his age, so I just married a good woman that knew my ways weel.'

'That's difficult to find, Mr McGilp, in all cases.'

'Not in mine, Mr Dryden; for I took my housekeeper, and we've been happy enough ever since. But I'm a practical man, though I'm fond o' art.'

By this time, Mr Dryden, having accomplished his purpose, took his hat, and having wished Mr McGilp a good morning, returned to his chambers.



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those who knew him well had predicted would be the effect of weeks. He was equally kind, equally active, equally sympathetic, some said equally cheerful; but Lady Helen and Harold Falcon, who had been down several times, knew better. An old malady, too, which had so long lain dormant as to lull suspicion, showed itself upon one or two occasions. That malady was heart complaint. A tenant, in whom he had taken much interest, had failed, from over-speculation in corn. It was a case likely to give momentary uneasiness to any one; but Lord Falconberg had fainted upon the somewhat abrupt disclosure of the circumstances. He had been riding with Lady Helen when her horse had become less governable than usual; and though he knew the courage of his daughter to have been equal to the occasion more than once, he had been affected in the same manner on their return home. A man of extraordinary stability hitherto, he had become nervous on little more than ordinary matters; and the fresh colour which had distinguished him, and which was so remarkable a beauty with his white hair, seemed to fade imperceptibly. He had the same pleasure, and more than his usual animation, in exercise; but it produced a painful and depressing effect upon him

afterwards. Lord Falconberg was going downhill, some people said; it is to be feared not without cause.

One thing he would have. He would have Lady Helen write for her cousin Harold; and Harold always came at her summons. Now Lady Helen did not like writing for Harold Falcon so often. She put it upon her father, but her conscience smote her; her maidenly modesty revolted, for she liked Harold. Must the truth be told? She loved Harold. She had always loved him; more when he was poor, and in debt, an Arab of the fashionable desert, than now, if possible, when he could buy, or at least bid for, the best wife that Fashion had to offer. She had often sighed, almost wept, over his delinquencies. She had watched his struggles with himself, and his inclinations, and worshipped him as a conqueror of more than many cities—a ruler of his own spirit.

It's not to be wondered at. Hawkestone, whom she loved, loved him. Her father, on whom she doted, doted on him. And Harold himself—there's no instinct so strong in a woman as that which tells her when and where she is loved. He had a secret sorrow. Was it poverty? was it false pride, that refused to be beholden to a woman's

wealth? Once it might have been so; it could be so no longer. It is quite true Harold Falcon did love his cousin Helen, he had long loved her; he had struggled against that less successfully than against his pitiful inclinations for extravagance and gambling. For circumstances were against him. When he would have withdrawn his foot from that dangerous threshold all things held him a prisoner. His uncle would have him. Hawkestone's health and affection restrained him. Now, when he would have left the country, he was cursed with an inheritance, with duties, with responsibilities, which dragged him nearer and nearer to that fatal happiness, the daily presence of his cousin Helen.

By the autumn, when they should have gone to Scotland, Lord Falconberg was not seriously ill, but weak. 'Helen, my love,' and she came and laid hers upon his attenuated hand, on which the veins rose more fully than usual, 'I often look round here, and think what I would have given to have known my boy their master; ah! what a master he would have made, Nelly. And now I think my greatest happiness would be to know that you were likely to stand here their mistress, by the side of my successor. How odd we should

all have loved him so, Nelly. Is it impossible that it can be ? ’

Then Lady Helen bent down her beautiful face to her father’s, and scalding tears dropped from her eyes upon his cheek. She saw how utterly she was misunderstood ; and yet not even to her father could she tell the truth. ‘ Ah, if Harold would but speak,’ thought she. And when he came in he did speak affectionately as ever, but not the words she longed to hear.

‘ Helen, I shall not leave Hawkestone at present. I must help you to nurse your father. You look tired ; I’m glad I declined Belleisle’s proposal to go to Paris.’

The young gentleman, in the mean time, about whom so many persons had been interesting themselves, had developed some traits of character since his first appearance in the previous autumn in Scotland. He had improved in a marked manner. He had cut his hair, and dismissed his velvet coat. He certainly cared less about the artistic effect which McGilp’s pupils were fond of exhibiting on their own persons, than the generality of foreigners. Their *abandon* and diet and conventionalities disgusted him ;

and nothing but a fear of his grandfather's or mother's displeasure prevented him from throwing up his profession. To say he was quite what Harold Falcon desired to see him, without direct interference, is to go beyond the truth; but he fell upon times when certain eccentricities of costume were not harshly judged, excepting by an older school. Dandyism of one kind, the tight, well-fitting, highly-polished in boots and manners, had made way for a different style. A moustache was not remarkable, nor a slouched hat highly censurable. Clothes were not meant to fit, so that loose trousers, and shooting-coats, or a near approach to it, passed muster, without subjecting the wearer to unpleasant remarks. Harold Falcon felt, though he didn't say, that with his good looks he was not pre-eminently gentlemanly, for he was very handsome, that blue-eyed feminine sort of beauty which belongs so much to the upper classes. He was very attractive, but he was neither an English gentleman nor a good dresser.

Twenty years ago there would have been but one opinion; when a strike among the tailors would have entailed serious inconvenience upon every gentleman in London. One likes now to have one's clothes made by Poole, by Bennett,

Stultz, Hammond, Browne, or any other well-known firm. But they are no longer inimitable in their cut (only in their workmanship), by a whole host of Nichollses, Moseses, and Doudneys. The shopman's apprentice can dress like a Brummell at a fourth of the cost. " And from the fashion of coats and trousers now, a man might well go without a tailor for six months, on an emergency, particularly if his wife were blest with a clever and obliging maid. Twenty years ago we should have said, unhesitatingly, of George Fellowes, that he was not a gentleman; he is a bold man who ventures to predicate that of a suit of clothes now.

He was a very good fellow, with certain faults, easily led, but truthful and independent. Given to falling in love, and rather inconstant: more than cheerful, and willing to take the world as he found it. Since Harold Falcon had been less in town, and had let his house at Egmont, George Fellowes had made the most of his welcome at the Hall, or as he was pleased to tell his friends at McGilp's and elsewhere, most ungratefully, 'The 'all. Old Cripplegate always calls it so; and when I first came to England I always thought it was the right thing to do. My grandfather's a Dutchman, and he speaks ten times as good English as—'



'Your father-in-law,' shouts one of McGilp's most promising pupils; upon which Fellowes throws a plate full of bones and scraps at the offender, pretending to be offended, but mightily tickled with the soft impeachment.

'What do you do there all day, Fellowes? old Gilp's as savage as a bear.'

'Do there? why, go out riding on the carriage horses, and have croquet on the lawn, and pic-nics in the park, and the most tremendous feeds. I'm painting him a lot of pictures; and we're going to dine at one of the great city dinners in the winter, that I may make him a sketch of a fellow called 'Arker. He's the loudest voice in England—but one can't sketch his voice you know.'

Then he had to submit to more badinage on the subject of the young lady, whose name having slipped out by accident, was the subject of various rhymes, to say nothing of puns. 'Bella, horrida bella,' said one friend. 'Isabella, very odd fella,' said another. A third coupled her with 'a ging-ham umbrella;' and a fourth wished to know whether he would 'sell her,'—all of which witticisms were parried with just that amount of force and dexterity which said, Come on again.

Of course the position of George Fellowes when he first came to England, and for some time



afterwards, was anomalous. 'Noblemen, well-known patrons of Art, will pick up stray genius, undeveloped talent, wherever they can find it. Mæcenas and Pollio are useful characters, and not uncostly to maintain. Jew-dealers and curiosity vendors find original Rembrandt manufacturers are not unlikely men to have located with them, promising capability for high art. But what was poor Hawkestone to do with such a thing when he had it? Well, we all know now how far from this view of his obligations to old Jansen's god-child were his notions when he invited him to ask for assistance in a strange land. It was only natural that every one should set it down to this cause: and all his friends very properly said,—'I wonder whether Hawkestone's *protégé* will turn out a great man. What can he know about art?' And when he died, they derived considerable amusement from Harold's difficulties. 'He might as well have bought him a white elephant, a mummy, or a Circassian slave,' said they.

The secret of Harold Falcon's life, then, was at length known. To few, it is true; but it was no longer a secret which he shared only with those who he was assured would not make it known. On the contrary, Dryden had already

told it to George Falcon, to Sir Samuel Cripple-gate, and was only weighing in his mind how long it should be kept from Lord Falconberg. The wary lawyer, after all, had determined that it must go from him to the earl, or not at all. He now regretted that he had mentioned the subject at all; or that he had not gone at once to Harold. But he and Harold were not friends; in fact, they were nearly enemies; and Dryden was not a man to forget or to forego revenge, when it was in his power to achieve it. Harold did not like Mr Dryden; and it was by his influence that a certain portion of the business of the Falconberg estates had gone elsewhere than into his pockets. For Harold Falcon he cared nothing, but he cared much for himself; and he was by no means certain that belling the cat might not be the best means of insuring his own reward.

Lord Falconberg had his faults, good as he was. His family pride, as revolving round his own house, was very great. He had no false pride. He would have associated with any good or great man: poverty, when respectable, was by him to be respected: humility of birth was no drawback to his esteem—it was an accident entirely out of the reach of man to rectify. But what is called a *mésalliance* in his own family was

a thing scarcely to be forgiven. Harold knew this as well or better than the lawyer; and as once he feared to provoke him, now he feared to grieve him, more even than Dryden did. It was from this reticence that he had lived with a burden, unpardoned, unshared, unmitigated for twenty years. Anybody could understand how it happened: and though he at this distance of time looked back upon his strange infatuation with wonder and amazement, the world (had they known it as he knew it) would have been even more lenient to his folly than he to himself.

When Lord Cranstone destroyed himself, Harold Falcon was a beggar. He was not only a beggar in the ordinary sense of the word, which means that he owed thousands he could not pay, and would henceforth be dependent for mere bread upon his uncle, until his aunt should give him a new start in life,—but he was a beggar in reputation. He could show nowhere; and most probably that damaged reputation would have taken away the only chances of reparation that remained to him. Therefore, however suffering tailors, hatters, boot-makers, '*et hoc genus omne*,' might be shunted for the time, his credit with the world must be saved.

Jansen had done him that service at a heavy

price. Why had he asked it? Was he tired or sceptical of bills, post obits, promissory notes, or I O Us? Well, it might be from a practical pauper. Or had he something still at stake, the realization of which he doubted but by the present salvation of his victim? Bernhard Jansen was the most generous, the most speculative of money-lenders: and now he shot his last and best bolt to get his other ventures back.

It answered. The price was heavy to Harold; and Jansen took a security which repaid him in kind.

Margaret Jansen, we have said, was a beauty—of a beauty so rare as seldom to be seen. Her course had been somewhat erratic. To what extent her father really never knew. Her mother had been one of those women who live without principle, without care, without feeling. She had one desire: to see her daughter married to a gentleman, by which she meant one higher in the social scale than herself. Her life with Jansen had been without mutual confidence, and on his part without respect or affection. On that fatal beauty she had traded: and whither her speculations had led her she was ignorant. Constant quarrels at home had been the result of her carelessness and profligacy. At one time the

girl was sent from home ; at another, she was confined under lock and key. Letters had been waylaid, read, returned ; and threats of personal vengeance vented against the unknown participants in Margaret's disgrace. But Bernhard Jansen had never been able to detect an overt act of immorality ; and flattered himself on his judgment and well-timed security.

It was then that Harold Falcon's difficulties offered a solution of his. Marriage with Captain Falcon would make it all safe. Once in the hands of a husband, and his fears and anxieties were at an end. Harold sold himself for the preservation of his credit with the world ; and accompanying Jansen and his daughter to Nuremberg had contracted the marriage, which we have detailed in the conversation between Dryden and his friend George Falcon.

Harold Falcon had looked steadily at the alternative that presented itself to him. On the one side absolute ruin ; the loss of his place in society, a tarnished name, and certain deprivation of his family's countenance. He dearly loved his cousin Helen ; but his reckless career had already placed her beyond his reach, whatever might have been his aspirations while holding a position as a gentleman and an officer. How much better to think

no more of such a prospect, and to submit patiently and silently to his own condemnation ! On the other, he bargained for immediate release from the destruction that stared him in the face, a life's expatriation, and a marriage half the disgrace of which was annulled by the necessary severance of former ties.

He comforted himself by a few wretched examples of a like fate. He had heard of men who once had lived as he had done, reckless, indifferent, crippled, who made the cities of Germany, France, and Italy their homes. He heard of their second-hand gambling, and racing, their spurious fashion and impulsive gaiety : men who said they were happy, who forgot friends and connections, and who were satisfied with their daily bread, hardly shared by some faded beauty of a class unfitted for their own ; women whose faults had been the result of the love they bore these very men. How little he knew of the misery which accompanied their gradual downfall, and of the one strong tie, an unequal marriage, which restricted all hope of a return to better things, should the chance ever present itself.

But Harold's trial was of a different kind from this.

Margaret Jansen was a woman of no common

mind. She had many faults, she was passionate, self-willed, proud in her way. She had imbibed strange and romantic notions from the injudicious reading with which she had been allowed to feed her brain. She was unhappy in her home ; if she liked her mother's indulgence, she felt no respect for her character ; if she respected her father's talents and energy, she feared the violence of his temper. Hers was a home without love. At the time that Harold Falcon, a gentleman, a man of fashion, had been proposed to her as a husband, when the scheme had been first unfolded to her, she was a prisoner in her father's house, suffering alternately from her mother's caprice and her father's passion. It is scarcely too much to say that of the latter she was in personal fear. Harold had been kind to her. Female beauty, such as hers, could not fail to make an impression on any man : and of all those who came to her father's house, none seemed so likely to please the eye of woman, or so capable of making a home, at least, comfortable, as Harold Falcon. They said nothing of love. Harold's heart was too full of his misfortunes ; and Margaret had other motives which determined her in her reluctant obedience to her father's commands. She would marry Captain Falcon, if Captain Falcon would marry her.



And so they went to Nuremberg, and they were married. Those few days, in which to escape observation he travelled alone, were heavy days, fraught with pangs of conscience of the sacrifice he was making, of the unalterable condition he was imposing on himself: more than once he hesitated, and wondered whether he should try his uncle's generosity. Pity that he had not. But at that time Lord Falconberg had four sons, and the ties which bound them had not yet been drawn so tight as in after life. He couldn't even trust his cousin Hawkestone. And above all, he was doing this thing for money, which he had too long despised.



## CHAPTER XVII.

## HOW HAROLD FALCON BORE HIS SENTENCE.

WITH all that he had thought about his coming marriage, and his patient determination to bear what he had brought down upon himself, and to act honestly and kindly by the woman who had sacrificed herself to him, Harold was scarcely prepared for what did happen. He was never a vain man, and he did not think that his intended wife was dying in love with him. But he did think that she liked him at least better than the crowd of flatterers and dandies that often pretended to want pictures, carving, curiosities, even loans at forty per cent., for the pleasure of making love to Bernhard Jansen's daughter. The necessity for making her an affectionate and honest husband he put down as part of the penalty he was about to pay for having ruined himself by early extravagance; and when he looked at her he thought he might survive the difficulties of the situation. The recollection of Lady Helen

was a thorn in his side,—but what two things in common were there between his cousin and his present condition and prospects? So he made up his mind to much, but not to the real accident that befell him.

The wedding was quiet and mysterious enough to have satisfied St Anthony or Miss Martineau, had they been induced to regard matrimony in a more favourable light than they are reported to have done. The ceremony fully completed between a woman in the most ordinary of walking costumes and a thick veil, and an Englishman in a frock-coat, who walked into an heretical place of worship in a suburb of the town, attended by old Bernhard Jansen and another witness, was not likely to excite a lively interest in Nuremberg, at an early hour of the morning. So they went and returned, no man looking on. Under the least remarkable of external circumstances the future heir to the Falconberg title and estate was married.

But virtually at the church door, or as soon after leaving it as possible, that marriage came to be dissolved. In the house of a relation who had given them shelter, before any baked meats that were to have performed their parts at the *déjeuner* could be cold, the lady declined empha-

tically to receive her husband. She admitted him to her presence, and with heightened colour and streaming eyes had prayed him to forgive her, declaring she could see him no more. The asseverations of a gentleman, of almost a lover, were inefficient to shake her resolve. She had done him an injury ; but it had never presented itself to her in this light before. The vows she had taken were false, the step she had allowed him to take degrading to himself and all connected with him. Would he leave her now, yes, now, and for ever ! Her want of courage, she said, had ruined them both. It had failed to console her, and had dragged him a step or two lower with her. Strange to say, she would tell nothing more. Her husband entreated, her father stormed and swore as usual ; but his threats had lost their influence. Harold attempted in those first days to solve the mystery of her caprice ; but he was unsuccessful even in his endeavour to see her with her own good-will, and certainly without it he had no mission to do more than his duty.

Her father, we have said, interfered, most injudiciously, and without effect ; and long before Harold left the neighbourhood, she had been ill, insensible, raving with fever, delirious, and con-

valescent. Her delirium had partially revealed her situation. Under unpromising conditions a son was born to her; but both the mother and child lived and throve, when Harold Falcon was back in England.

But Harold Falcon was not as ignorant of these things as a less honest man would like to have remained. With the property left him by his aunt, he had discharged his debts, most religiously those to Bernhard Jansen. He had sold himself, and was glad to pay back the money; he was compelled to pay the penalty too. It had been necessary to tell him of the result of his wife's illness; and he had from that day forwarded to Jansen such sums as he could afford for the maintenance of his wife and the education of her boy, who, as appeared to him, had an indefinite claim upon him for bare support. As time wore on these remittances became larger; but he neither saw them, nor did he ever vouchsafe the slightest interest in their welfare. He remembered his classics only so far as to repeat with Antigone, '*γαμος ἄγαμος, γαμος ἄγαμος,*' and to regard both mother and son as a fatal curse which he had drawn down upon his head by his reckless and ruthless extravagance.

After the death of his cousins at Chamouni, and

when he began to realize a certain alteration in his position, which the disinterested world is sure to acknowledge for us, his views became more serious as to his responsibilities, and more cheerless as to the belongings which surrounded him. Harold Falcon and everything connected with him assumed an importance when there was but one life, instead of four, between him and the title. It struck with considerable chill upon him when he first recalled to mind that his wife and her son must share what he certainly never intended to have bartered for money. As long as he was Mr Falcon, they might have lived and died unlamented, almost forgotten. It might be quite a different thing now. Whoever heard of an earl dying unlamented and forgotten, or even a countess and her son? And if not wholly uninteresting in death, how much less so in life would they be?

In fact, he saw what everybody else might have seen, that if Lord Hawkestone died he would have to stare in the face a newly-found Countess and a Baron Hawkestone, who was not bone of his bone nor flesh of his flesh, and for whom he didn't care one jot. He had assured himself of this, and it was a very bitter pill to swallow. Upon several occasions he had made

up his mind to tell Hawkestone: and just as he had positively determined to do so, he was sent to the Castle, and before his return Hawkestone was no more. The singular meeting, too, of the boy with his cousin; his fancy for him; his promise of protection, and his own participation in it, forced on him against his will, were curious but damaging elements in his hopes or plans of quiet or secrecy, if any such he had formed.

In one thing Harold had not been perfectly honest; and his reticence on the subject was natural. He had never told Jansen, in so many words, who he was, or that he was in any way likely to occupy the situation which awaited him. Nor had Jansen or his wife the slightest suspicion of it, until letters from the boy himself had given them the information. That he should have been living under the roof of Captain Falcon was a strange coincidence. It was casually mentioned by the boy, but it was impossible that a conclusion should not be drawn; and it was easily confirmed as the correct one by Jansen's friends and correspondents in England.

The Jansens had never mentioned their connection with him to any one. They seemed willing that it should die out by lapse of time; and, in fact, were so. But Harold himself had another

part to play. He recognized a legal right to what the world valued very highly; and though he would have gladly been without it, he judged it for them as they might have been supposed to value it themselves. Of one thing he was well assured: the person who was some day to be Lord Falconberg must be a gentleman in habits and education, and it was his duty to make him so as far as he could. To have withdrawn him from his inclinations and pursuits roughly and pertinaciously in opposition to his wishes could have had no good effect, and might have been the means of exposing an authority on his part which for the present he chose to conceal. Thus he told George Fellowes nothing. By gentle suggestions he got rid of certain peculiarities, the growth of Düsseldorf and Munich. By giving him a home at Egmont, without appearing to do so, he taught the boy how to dress—no inconsiderable step in education to a German student. He formed him imperceptibly upon the model of English gentlemen whom the young man occasionally saw there; so that by the time he was making love to Miss Cripplegate and sketches for her father, there was nothing incongruous in recognizing the heir of the Falconbergs in a tall, fair-haired, good-looking, cheerful, but rather



foreign-looking young man. Harold Falcon was famous for vacillation, and as he put off day by day the painful announcement he had to make, it became more and more distasteful to him. Obstacles of this kind are like the renewal of bills, the longer you keep them open the worse they become.

Harold Falcon's love for Helen, unlike the love of most men, had been a terrible drawback to him. He would not have given her a moment's pain for the world ; but perhaps nothing could do so more effectually than the disappointment preparing for her. The hopes of his family, not only of Lord Falconberg, but every one connected with him, tended one way after the death of Lord Hawkestone—to Harold's marriage. He, at least, had not kept his secret so well but that once or twice his name had been coupled with that of Lady Helen. To one old lady he had questioned the propriety of the marriage of such near relations ; to another, Lady Clara Marchmont, the only surviving sister of Lord Falconberg, who had talked about the requirements of a title and its duties, he had simply, *horresco referens* ! d—d the title and everything connected with it. No man alive had ever been so plagued by good fortune.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

## A LITTLE DINNER.

‘MY DEAR.’ Sir Samuel was wont to be more affectionate now that he had become accustomed to high life. The lady seldom relapsed into tenderness before her people; frequently into temper.

‘Sir Samuel!’ said she, drawing herself up, and looking at Isabella, who immediately rounded her shoulders a trifle more.

‘Don’t you think we ought to have a little dinner?’

‘Certainly not, Sir Samuel, until we have finished breakfast.’ Here the young lady began laughing, and Sir Samuel smiled as forcibly as he thought his wife’s temperament would allow. The footman left the room rather abruptly.

‘My dear, I mean a little dinner to our friends.’

‘Then, Sir Samuel, be good enough another time to make your language intelligible to your

family. And in whose honour do you propose to open your house now ?'

'Well, coming out of the City yesterday I met—'

'I think we have lately had most of your City friends down here.'

'Oh, this wasn't a City friend at all. It was Captain Falcon, my dear. He's coming down to see his tenants at the Villa on business ; so I asked him to take pot-luck with us afterwards.'

'I trust you expressed yourself in different language to him.'

As Sir Samuel was not at first aware of any solecism in good breeding or language, he waited a minute or two, chewing the cud, which was a piece of dry toast, of bitter reflection. 'Oh, ah ! I see. I said "his mutton," my dear. Of course, he knows I mean those hentrys and things. He understands what I mean by mutton just as well as Bella there.' Bella perfectly understood pot-luck, and preferred it to mutton. It left an ampler margin, and was considerably nearer the truth.

'Who's coming, papa, besides Captain Falcon ?' said the conscious young lady.

'Well, I asked Dryden—my old friend, Dryden. You know Dryden, Lady Cripplegate,' added the City gentleman, throwing a sop which

he knew would be acceptable to Cerberus. 'I think, too, we must have the Weltons and old Lady Carbuncle; and we shall want one more young man for Miss Welton, to make up the party. Who do you say, Bella? There's Stringer, or Tipping;' the lady's face fell, and as she gave no sign of pleasure he pretended to hesitate, 'or that artist fellow, what's-his-name.' This was a very poor attempt at deception.

'Do you mean Mr Fellowes, papa?' Lady Cripplegate only looked her sentiments.

'Ah, Fellowes. Why not, my Lady?'

'Only because he's been here within the last few days, and I think neither Mr Dryden nor Captain Falcon would care about meeting him.'

'I think he's just the man for them. Dryden likes art, and I'm sure he'd be glad to meet him; and he was very intimate at the Villa before Captain Falcon let it. A good dinner once a week does these young painters a deal of good, my Lady. I'm for Fellowes; what do you say, Bella?' But as Bella had left the room, the knight and his lady had it all to themselves.

'That young man's too much here, Sir Samuel.'

'I don't see that, my dear. Persons in our

position ought to patronize hart; it's a duty we owe to society.'

'Fiddle-de-dee about art. If you want your daughter to marry a beggar, you'd better say so at once, and I dare say she'll be found agreeable; but I'm not going to patronize shilly-shallying, and love-making, and all that sort of thing. Unequal marriages aren't to my taste; so let's buy our high art at the regular shops, and pay for it as we get it.'

Have not my readers beheld the stately war horse, covered with trappings and in the best of company, prancing down St James'-street on a great occasion, treading as if he were afraid of breaking the stones, and curvetting to the heel of his rider and the admiration of the crowd. And have they not seen the same stately animal away from the gaping crowd, in his own green pastures, stripped of his trappings and free from his rider, capering about, now playing, now kicking and flourishing his tail in mere wantonness of enjoyment: let them tell me whether he was not to be more admired in his natural ease and grace than in the grandeur of his artificial state? So was it with Lady Cripplegate. When she was my Lady, and clothed herself in the admiration of her servants, her guests, her neighbours,

or her daughter, was she not grand and stately, prancing and curvetting, covered with the trappings of fashion and fearful of displaying her natural charms? but how much more charming when she forgot the world she had been thrust into unawares, and was cantering and playing in the world into which she had been born, and which was the natural pasture in which she truly delighted to revel.

So she was now : and as she folded her arms as of old and faced her spouse, he would have been less than man if he had failed to acknowledge and to admire the homely sense of her homely answer.

‘You’re right, Betsy,’ said the old gentleman, ‘but I can’t help myself now, for I asked ’em together. We must look after the girl. It won’t do to throw her at every blockhead that comes in the way.’ Saying which, he gave his old woman, as he used to call her, a hearty kiss.

‘No, Sam, for if you throw such things as that at people, there’s very few of our acquaintances that wouldn’t be learning to catch. However, we’ll have our dinner party ; and I’ll make Bella write a note to the Weltons, and send Splinters over on the mare. We shalln’t want the carriage till the afternoon.’

Sir Samuel kept his suspicions to himself, and only chuckled inwardly : and in the course of the morning he found that he should have a very comfortable party of ten to take, what he called, pot-luck, on the morrow. Pot-luck, on this occasion, meant a 'red-breeches day'—the best dinner-service, all the helpers, with Splinters at their head, the best dress-liveries, and the best of everything that the combined efforts of Grove, Gibley, and Baily could produce : and Sacks, as a great favour and with the true interests of the family at heart, brought up some Madeira that he never treated his master to—but on very great occasions.

By eight o'clock the next day, as the evenings were getting cool, before a small wood fire, the guests were assembled. Everybody knows the sort of thing. A large comfortably-furnished room ; the men all together about the fire, Lady Carbuncle, 'a blaze of turban, redness of nose, and very white and ample shoulders, at a distance, but the remains of what Sir Samuel called a uncommon fine woman, on close inspection. Miss Welton was discussing the novel of the past season (it wasn't one of mine) with Miss Cripple-gate, and young Fellowes was leaning over the back of that lady's chair, when the folding-doors

opened and dinner was announced. There's a pleasure in folding-doors, it looks to me as if your dinner came to you instead of your being troubled to go to it. To avoid any recurrence of its savours, however, you should have a second drawing-room farther off, to which you can retire for your coffee and music, should you be insatiable enough to want anything after your claret.

'We want your assistance here, Captain Falcon, about the hounds,' said Mr Welton, an enthusiastic sportsman, who was, as he believed, now sacrificing himself for the sake of the hounds by coming to Egmont. The roads were bad, the nights dark, and his coachman scarcely to be depended upon in a liberal servants' hall, which Mr Sacks' appearance indicated.

'I should be glad to give it, if I were ever here, but I'm tied to my own county. Without an acre of land beyond my garden, I fear I could not be of much active assistance.'

Harold was already a subscriber, but condemned all woodland counties in practice, as fit for nothing but the encouragement of poachers and wandering tourists. Mr Dryden sat on the opposite side of the table to Harold, but lower down, he having the seat of honour next to his



hostess—opposite to him was Mr Welton. Harold and Dryden were so placed as to necessitate but little intercourse, but it was impossible to avoid seeing that the distance was materially increased by Harold Falcon's dislike. They were both handsome, both distinguished-looking men; but the one never trusted the other, and Harold kept the lawyer at arm's-length both before and after dinner. It was perhaps a prejudice, but it was a strong one.

The young artist said nothing until he was appealed to on the subject on which he was most capable of speaking—the continent, and his art. He was a dabbler in literature too, but that was out of the range of pretence excepting in the case of the young women. Altogether Harold Falcon had reason to be satisfied with his *protégé*, and he had begun to dress less like a foreigner. If he would but trust his tailor! thought he. It might have been remarked, and was by one person, that Captain Falcon addressed him as little as he did Mr Dryden, beyond the simplest greeting: openly taking no notice of his occupation, though his attention had been called to it by Lady Cripplegate.

‘Our young friend has delighted us with the



sketches he has been making for Sir Samuel. We have several views of the home park, Captain Falcon. The sunsets here are marvellous for richness of colouring.' Lady Cripplegate had some faint idea that since Sir Samuel's knight-hood they had been made a little better for her; almost to order, if I may so speak.

'I'm glad of it. My cousin took great interest in him. You seem to have made great improvements in the house.'

'I think we have. You know, we really almost rebuilt it. The Italian style, after all, for an edifice of this magnitude is the most commodious.'

'I hardly know whether you can count upon the atmosphere of Italy, charming as this place is for trying it,' replied Harold.

'Well, we have the winter to come. We must endeavour to keep the house warm with society. I hope we shall have you here.'

'Ah! you don't care about my tenants, Lady Cripplegate.'

'To tell you the truth, Captain Falcon, Sir Samuel hasn't called. One is very anxious to give as much countenance as possible to the neighbourhood; but persons in his position must

draw the line somewhere. We meet in the train and in church, and I think that's as far as we can go.'

'Perhaps so. On the one hand to London, on the other to heaven.' 'But one ought to be very particular about the company in which the journey is taken,' he added to himself. And though the lady did not hear him, she didn't like Harold quite so much as she did Mr Dryden, who never laughed at her.

'Magistrates! never heard such a thing in my life! Committed him. They are the greatest fools alive,' said the civic dignitary, from the other end.

'You're not in the commission of the peace, Sir Samuel?' inquired Mr Welton, with a bland smile, vowing inwardly that he was not going to stand this vulgarity for all the foxes in the world, and determined upon asking for an arrangement by which the whole of the committee should take it in turn to visit Cripplegate.

'Not since I was Lord Mayor, sir,' says that worthy and unconscious knight. 'We did get justice done in the city; but these country benches are most incomprehensible. Six months and hard labour for a fowl! Talking of fowls, Mrs Welton tells me that her poultry-yard pays

a good percentage, to say nothing of the convenience. Now, I must drive over and see it; I must indeed. I want all the people here to do the same.'

'Lady Cripplegate or your daughter must give great attention to it then, Sir Samuel; Mrs Welton and the girls are always among them,' replied the easily appeased county gentleman, when he heard one of his favourite hobbies applauded so warmly and unexpectedly.

'Lady Cripplegate! oh, bless you, her ladyship won't do anything of that sort; and as to Isabella! I was thinking of the poor people, what a thing it 'ud be for them to cut out those rascally poulterers.' Isabella looked at her mother, who put an end to the discussion by discreetly rising, and Mrs Welton, with a rather gloomy countenance, sailed back again.

It's astonishing what mischief the best-intentioned vulgarity may do, and how clear of it good-breeding, with the most vicious propensities, may manage to steer.

'Not related to the Fellowes of Hazledean?'

said Mr Welton to George Fellowes.

'No. I was born in Germany.'

'Still I imagined it possible. By the way, Captain Falcon, I think they are connected with your family?'

‘My uncle’s eldest sister, Lady Mary, married one of the Fellowes of Hazledean ; she has been dead many years, and so has he. I hardly ever knew them. The son ? yes, he’s a barrister. I know him ; but I seldom see him now.’

He might have added that Lady Mary married against her family’s consent. That her husband, after spending all her money, broke her heart, and died himself, leaving not more than enough to educate their only son, the gentleman in question. Mr Welton saw that the subject was displeasing, and had the good feeling to drop the conversation.

Shortly after they joined the ladies.

Dryden had looked anything but comfortable during the discussion of the branches of the Fellowes’ family, and was not sorry when it came to an end. He had cautiously refrained from saying a word on the subject ; and soon after coffee Captain Falcon’s carriage was announced. ‘I thought you were going to sleep in the village, Captain Falcon,’ said his host. ‘We could have given you a shake-down,’—Lady Cripplegate looked up,—‘a bed, I mean, in the house ; room enough to put up a friend or two, as you see,’ saying which he took a general view of the well-lighted and spacious apartment.

‘No, thank you all the same; I go to London to-night. It’s not an unpleasant drive; and I must start for Hawkestone to-morrow early.’ Saying which the captain took his leave, and wondered why everybody should call him Captain, when he took sedulous care to leave his address always as Mr Falcon.

‘Pleasant gentlemanly man,’ said Welton; ‘good neighbour. I wish we had more like him in Dullford.’

Dryden said nothing. It is a great pleasure to know, on leaving early, that you must run the gauntlet of all you leave behind, who have an opinion of their own, though some advantage may accrue from remembering how few there are possessed of that inestimable qualification.

In the mean time George Fellowes had lost no time in engaging Isabella in a confidential conversation, and had been alternately selecting pieces of music and rejecting them, while the lady sat on a music-stool which turned first one way then another, and would have been invaluable to a lady or gentleman with a stiff neck. Catching her mother’s eye fixed upon her, with a conscious look she turned to the piano, and having executed with little fidelity but some taste a prelude, she commenced a song. The song finished, soda-

water and sherry were brought in, and the company took the hint, Mr Welton and his family going to his carriage and the rest of the company to their rooms, Sir Samuel and Dryden excepted.

‘What did Falcon mean by his relationship to Fellowes? I scarcely understood him.’

‘What he said; Lady Mary Falcon married a Fellowes. He was a *roué* and a drunkard, killed himself, in fact; and she died some time before, they say of a broken heart. The Falconberg title lapses when the male branch fails, and the property goes to the sisters, or their representatives, one of whom is my friend, Fellowes of the Temple.’

‘Then this youngster here is surely a relation of some sort?’

‘Ah, that I know nothing about. I didn’t know till the other day the name of this boy; and then I forgot all about the Falcons and the Fellowes being connections:’ that was not true, Mr Dryden. He did know it, and it struck him as very singular that this young man should have borne the name. ‘Perhaps it was the name that first interested Lord Hawkestone.’

‘Then you don’t know anything more about the lad than you did in the summer.’

‘Humph,’ ejaculated Mr Dryden, pondering

as to the loss he might sustain if he allowed old Cripplegate to discard the youngster, and afterwards to find out that he was heir to such a brilliant position as that. He could pretend to be utterly ignorant, to be sure ; then he would only be accounted a fool, and be replaced by a clever man. He couldn't give colour to his own suspicions, for if they proved false by any accident, then he would be in a worse position than before. Sir Samuel might forgive the loss of a big fish, but he'd never forgive being pulled into a hole by a little one. Temporizing, though difficult, was best ; so he determined to tell the story, as far as he had heard it, and to let the old man and his wife do as they liked about believing it.

So he did tell the story then and there as he had told it before. He didn't say that he believed the boy to be really Harold's son, begotten out of wedlock, legitimatized for the money's sake, and deserted with his mother capriciously and cruelly, when Harold saw a prospect of better days. That is what he himself believed, because it is what he would probably have been guilty of himself, and he knew hundreds more who would have been so too. The coincidence of names was odd, and the patronage of Lord Hawkestone so odd, that he believed it a ' case for a jury,' another



mode with Mr Dryden for expressing his conviction that true or false there was every prospect of its satisfying an uninquiring and dunder-headed public.

‘And you’ve no doubt about that?’ said Sir Samuel, preparing to go for the night.

‘I’ve no doubt about the truth of what I heard in Nuremberg, because I saw the document in question; and I’ve no doubt about your friend Fellowes being the grandson of one Bernhard Jansen, unless Mr McGilp is a most accomplished and singularly consequential liar; for he knew nothing at all about the previous question of Captain Falcon’s supposed marriage. A very gentlemanly young man he seems to be,’ added Mr Dryden, in a patronizing way, which more than retaliated on the absent youth the cool superiority assumed by Harold Falcon.

‘And if this is true that young man will be—’

‘Lord Falconberg’s heir,’ with which he went to bed, drawing down the corners of his mouth and muttering to himself, ‘One good turn deserves another.’

The following morning Sir Samuel had emerged from his bath, and was puffing and blowing like a grampus from the effects of it, when he heard through his dressing-room door the progress of the



wife of his bosom in her toilette. Now if there was a time in which her ladyship was to be caught in a good easy natural mood for the discussion of anything, it was during this hour. Whether the mind so far assimilated to the body as to disrobe and present itself, as one may say, *in puris naturalibus*, at such a time, or whether the externals of dignity and state did act upon Lady Cripple-gate as the Drury Lane properties once acted upon the late Mr Elliston, when he blessed his people after the fashion and with more than the sincerity of George the Fourth, I leave physiologists to determine. She was always accessible at those times to the business of common life, and it was impossible for Sir Samuel not to have discovered that her ladyship under bare polls, and in a morning wrapper, was not her ladyship in her best front and bugles.

In consideration of this the gentleman rubbed himself into a very pleasant state of high spirits, and having progressed to a certain state of decorous preparation, knocked at the door. Poking his head into the room to see that Lady Cripple-gate was not under the hands of her maid, which would have at once reduced the pleasures of communication to freezing-point, he said,

‘My dear, I’m glad we asked the painter—good move, very.’

‘Nonsense, Sam; he’ll move off to-day, and that will be better. It’s high time Bella was looking about her—all girls do at her time of life—I’m sure I did, and—’

‘Fortune threw me in your way, my dear,’ said Sir Samuel, proceeding to lather his chin very effectively, and with the very hottest of water short of boiling.

‘You mean old Botcher’s death threw fortune in your way, so I married you; and I don’t intend Bella to do anything else. Love in a cottage! There’s not room for a really respectable passion.’

‘Not such as you get into, my love,’ said Sam silyly. ‘But listen to me, I’ve some news for you—only, bless your soul, you mustn’t say a word, or there’ll be the devil to pay, and all the women in the county will be trying to walk round Bell, and that wouldn’t do at all.’ It was now the lady’s turn to look astonished, which she did.

‘And where did you hear all this?’ said she, after Sir Samuel had told her the story, as he himself had heard it, with the suggestions of his own fancy. ‘From Dryden, of course. I hope you’re satisfied.’

Lady Cripplegate did not say anything, but

finished her toilette with the assistance of her maid, and when she appeared at the breakfast table, her greeting was as stately as ever.

Towards the afternoon Sir Samuel found her in the library, and as he was going out she turned round and read aloud, *à propos* of nothing,—

‘Earl of Falconberg, creation, 1481; Baron Hawkestone, 1372; Edward Maurice Fitzhenry Falcon, son of the 11th Earl, by Margaret, daughter of Henry, Duke of Spillsborough, born at Hawkestone Castle, 1792; married, in 1827, Helen, daughter of the 6th Baron Harcourt—she died in 1843. He was educated at Eton, and Christ Church, Oxford; was a Lieutenant-Colonel of the Grenadier Guards; retired in 1832. Lord-Lieutenant of the county of —, Colonel of Militia, M.P. for Grease-palm, accepted the Chiltern Hundreds (what could he want with a few hundreds at such a time?), and is patron of seven livings.’

‘Do you mean to say that George will be all that?’

‘I didn’t mean to say anything at all about it; but if he’s an earl with thirty thousand a year he can be anything he likes.’ Such was old Crip-legate’s creed, and he wasn’t going to turn dissenter, when he thought himself likely to reap the benefit of his orthodoxy.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## THE JANSENS AGAIN.

THE winter passed as it had done for some centuries, bringing its share of discomfort to the rich and poor. It carried off the old and infirm, and improved the position of none of our acquaintance. Lord Falconberg grew perceptibly weaker: Harold became no more cheerful: Lady Helen refused Lord Belleisle, who, if he ceased to be a lover, remained a friend: George Falcon came back to his work much as he left it in the autumn: Dryden took no further steps in the elucidation of the mystery he had entered upon: McGilp was back from his autumnal trip in the Isle of Skye to the realities of earth: Sir Samuel Cripplegate had become a sportsman, the —shire Jorrocks, they called him: George Fellowes progressed in his suit with Isabella Cripplegate, and Jansen and his daughter were still in the neighbourhood of Cleves.

It is of the latter that I wish to speak. I can

easily imagine that Bernhard Jansen may have puzzled my readers. He was not consistent. It should rather be said that the conduct exhibited at a later period of his life was not consistent with his character as a younger man. I should like to know upon what principle it was expected that it should be. What's the use of years, what of experience? What the natural effect of time upon the passions, the feelings, the character in general? If there be one thing more calculated than another to work a change of temperament in man or woman, it is the decay of that physical system, the natural decay of that energy which accompanies failing years. Old men may be passionate, or irritable, or obstinate, but they are not violent, headstrong, or determined—at least, not as they were. It is the nature of age to become, as Horace says (I don't know that any other author is ever quoted now, and I have reduced my reading to keep pace with the age in which we live), 'Dilator, spe longus, iners, avidusque futuri.'

So Bernhard Jansen was no longer that violent, headstrong, determined person, which we have known him when in Oxfordshire, but had become tamed and curbed by time and circumstances.

But we must go back to look at him twenty

years ago, and endeavour to explain and analyze his motives, which dictated his conduct in our story. He hated his wife: this is a very bad trait in a man's character; but like a French murder of a very heinous kind, may have extenuating circumstances attached to it. She was a very difficult wife to love. There is no saying what *she* might have been under another kind of despotism (of course no wife is very good under any other form of government), but Jansen's was a despotism utterly opposed to all her feelings and idiosyncracies. She was false, he was true; she was cunning, he was open; she was niggardly, he was generous; she loved money for itself, he loved money for its uses; she was vain, frivolous, wanton, delighted in show, and was devoid of principle. He was independent, firm, indifferent to ostentation, and always acted upon principle, however bad it might be. He was of an overbearing disposition, cruel, and tyrannical to his dependants, his wife and daughter among them; but she was provoking, childish, and selfish to a degree. And he was a man of taste and refinement at heart, feelings which her vulgarity daily outraged. How they ever came together, I cannot say. When she died she was unregretted—I forgot to say that she had done so much against her in-

clination, for I thought her of so little importance. But it took place in Germany many years ago.

Bernhard Jansen's love for his daughter, in the earlier part of his life, had been of a mixed character. Her beauty created in him, as in most men, a sort of pride, which he mistook for affection. How much of parental love may be attributed to the score of that dependence on himself which a father creates. He did love her with something more than this, I suppose, for it was demonstrative in outward marks of tenderness; but perhaps it appeared the greater as being contrasted with that for his wife.

When Bernhard Jansen proposed his daughter as a wife to Harold Falcon, he had certainly no idea of the mischief that had been brewing. He knew her to be wilful, frivolous, and wrong-headed; but he thought that her want of principle had led her into no danger beyond one of those flirtations with which the neighbourhood abounded. Some men err in this respect from utter simplicity of character, and wake to find themselves cruel sufferers for a venial or constitutional fault. Jansen's was not of this kind, but it was equal to it, and the result the same. His was preoccupation.

And when the knowledge came to him, as it did after his daughter's marriage with Harold, which was to put an end to his anxieties on her account, the disappointment and affliction must not be underrated by those whose feelings are more explosive and impulsive. Jansen was a very severe sufferer. He was racked with doubts what line of conduct to pursue. There are fathers who would leave a child to the tender mercies of a world which never wholly forgives that error in woman, and is consistently lenient to men. There are fathers who, with a beautiful, sheltering pity, worth all the love in the world, Christian-like, protective, forgiving, and forgetful of their own wrongs in those of their child, would open their half-broken hearts to the lamb that had strayed, to water its repentance with their tears. Jansen was neither the one nor the other. He was not likely to forget or forgive in a moment; and he was as little likely to cast her off. He chose a middle course; it took time to reconcile him to his own determination; but there came a time when he learnt to talk to Margaret without a frown, in something more than monosyllables; to nurse her child, and to converse with her on indifferent subjects. He was, in some respects, a very just man; his hard and impracticable



spirit made him so. Thus he knew that his own conduct had been injudicious ; his wife's unprincipled ; and when she died, he softened towards the only beings whom he could well call his own.

Margaret's illness, too, which had left her at death's door, had had a great influence upon him. It prevented him from acting with undue severity at the time he was most disposed to do so ; hence his eventual forbearance, which, as he grew in years, turned to a feeling of kindness for her, as great as any he had felt for her since she was a girl.

Taking into consideration, therefore, Jansen's peculiarities, it is not remarkable that even for years the painful subject of his daughter's misconduct had never been discussed between them or before him. The attempt had once been made by his wife, and been received by him with such a storm of violent indignation, with such passionate expressions of grief and displeasure, as effectually to prevent its recurrence. It was years before he heard the truth ; and it is doubtful whether he believed it thoroughly at the time of which we are speaking.

However, the reader had better hear it, as we are approaching the end of our story ; and though

I am proud of attaching no importance to 'real life,' this happens to be about the only part of the story that has a syllable of truth in it. Mrs, or Frau Jansen, as she was habitually called at home, had some distant connections living in a retired part of Scotland. Whether devised as a punishment, or for the prevention of Margaret Jansen's infirmities, her father decided upon sending her from home, and no more melancholy sentence could be devised than banishment to the Isle of Skye. From that place, it was asserted by Margaret herself, she had been married—secretly, clandestinely, but most effectively and legitimately, married. That she had managed to deceive her parents by private correspondence with her lover, who had followed her there; and that she had deceived in like manner the persons to whom she had been intrusted, a rude fisherman and his illiterate wife and daughter. That she had wandered about where she liked and when she liked; that she was constantly, in fact daily, with her lover; that there had been neither fraud, force, nor deceit of any kind; and that she as firmly believed in his intention to take her away from her home when certain family circumstances had happened, as that she believed in her own existence. All this she averred; and if they

were not the ravings of an over-wrought brain, they were the words of sober sadness. He did not redeem his promise. She waited, half heart-broken, at her father's house. She wrote letter after letter to his addresses, and received none in return. She applied, by unmistakable means, at his college and elsewhere, and learnt as unmistakably that there was no such person to be found.

Then she knew she had been deceived. She reluctantly admitted to herself and to her mother the shameful and humiliating truth that lay buried beneath her bosom. But one means of escape remained, and that unexpectedly presented itself in a marriage with Harold. Her mother urged it, her own fears seconded that evil counsel ; and the result the reader knows. Then came the reaction of some honest principle, but too late to save the man whom, if she could not love, she was prepared to respect ; and she released him from a participation in her deceit by giving him only a part of her wretched confession, and concealing that which would have freed him from his embarrassment. Had Harold known at the time, or even later, the fact of her previous marriage, he might have taken steps to have secured himself from a delusion which had embittered his existence. Unfortunately, Margaret imagined

she had freed him by her simple act of manumission, and by her well-kept resolve to see him and to trouble him no more.

Jansen's pride, and a very natural feeling, induced him to acquiesce in a reticence not very culpable. 'Let us live in peace, Margaret,' said he, when he had heard the whole of her history. 'You wronged Harold Falcon, yourself, and me; you can do no good now by stirring hand or foot. Harold Falcon is gone. Silence must serve his turn best. Fellowes may be living; may claim you yet for his wife. You can do nothing to accelerate that event. Your boy will know his father in that case. According to your account, he will lose little should such an event never occur.' This was almost the longest and harshest speech the old man had yet made upon the subject; and the once wilful Margaret Jansen acquiesced.

All this was very wrong; but for people who did not want an *exposé*, it was very politic. And at the end of twenty years George Fellowes, senior, had never been heard of. It was almost excusable had she chosen to consider herself Mrs Falcon. It was well, perhaps, with all her old instincts, that she did not know of the temptation to do so.

We said winter had passed. An early spring made the Clevische Berg bright with its early foliage and warm soil, and Margaret and her father sat in an arbour at the bottom of the garden, the old Hollander enjoying his handsome, richly-coloured meerschaum, a work of art in itself, with his Flasche Marcobrunner (for he loved good wine) by his side.

‘You have had letters from England, Margaret?’

‘I have; from George.’ And Margaret grew red, and looked uncomfortable, as she did whenever she had to mention certain names.

‘And he speaks of—of Captain Falcon?’

‘Yes; and of Lady Helen. Sir,’ for Margaret now always addressed her father somewhat formally, ‘do you think we are acting quite honestly?’

‘Then what to do? Can we tell him all, without some proof?’ said the old man.

‘But do you not know what George will be? at least you tell me so, if this Captain Falcon is the same. Of course he must be, for his name is Harold.’

‘Doubtless, legally he is Captain Falcon’s heir, and will be Lord Hawkestone; who could have believed it, only so short a time ago? To

tell him now, without proofs of—well, Margaret, I must say it—the first marriage, is to bring upon him the penalty you have so honestly spared him.'

Margaret let her knitting drop into her lap, and sat with her hands folded above it. 'I would willingly spare him still. My boy will be better as an honestly born artist than as—' here she touched her eyes with her handkerchief and turned away from her father's gaze. 'But they say he ought to have married his cousin,—Lady Helen, George calls her. It is this fear hanging over him that has blighted his happiness for all this time. Oh, how wicked I have been, and how kind and forbearing he, when he might have exposed us.' Margaret did not know that Harold had some mixed motives for his silence too.

'But the proofs, Margaret. Dead or alive, we must have the proofs or hold our tongues.'

'And you, sir, have heard nothing. Nothing more than you told me?'

'Not much. The advertisement remained unanswered for the certificate or any proofs of the marriage, and your mother's relations are dead or have left the place. If we could but have heard through them of the clergyman, or of any George Fellowes. And yet it seems now so wrong to

leave Captain Falcon in ignorance of it all.' Then Bernhard Jansen applied sedulously to his pipe again. 'Something should be done. Margaret, we must go to London.' Saying which he finished his Marcobrunner, and went into the house. But before he started for London he heard something—well—perhaps to his advantage.

## CHAPTER XX.

## STARTLING INTELLIGENCE.

Two mornings later Herr Jansen was vigorously employed. His portmanteau, like other portmanteaux, was much too full ; and shirts and handkerchiefs, for he had imbibed English notions of cleanliness, kept peeping out and tumbling about, just as yours or mine do on inspection by the Prussian Douaniers, who might learn politeness from the French. His clothes too, it must be considered, were of a large pattern, as well as his boots. Though my bootmaker once told me, 'Boots are boots, and always cost two guineas, sir,' still they don't all take the same space.

Jansen himself was in his shirt-sleeves, looking at the thing in despair.

'Let me help you, sir,' said Margaret ; 'there, that will do ; now sit down while I lock it. No, not there,' as her father took his seat on his bedstead,—'on the portmanteau.' He obeyed her, and the effect was electrical.



At that moment the servant girl brought in a letter. 'From England,' said he, and proceeded to read it. To have looked at his face no one would have thought that it contained startling intelligence. Certainly Margaret did not guess its contents, but continued to busy herself in preparations for her father's journey.

The letter was from Mr McGilp. In pity for the half-foreign education of his correspondent the good Scot had endeavoured to translate his native tongue into English, and we will endeavour to give a retranslation to save the time and clear up the uncertainties of the reader.

'My dear old Friend,—

'The boy [which he called 'callant'] is an idle young scapegrace; he never would work at his profession, and now he's fallen in love. I always remark that when men don't work they do fall in love. It's the "vera warst" sign I know of; and I'd prefer of the twa they should fall into the Serpentine. He's got painting a young woman, one Sir Samuel Cripplegate's daughter; whether it's her cheeks or her portrait, I don't rightly know. She's no great good, I'm told, except in the way o' siller. They say she's a haughty [he wrote 'toutie'] lass, and won't look at him.

Perhaps that's all the better for his chance, as he's not over winsome. But you needn't fash yourself about that. Handsome is as handsome does, and he's no beauty. He's been writing books too, and no good ever comes o' books. There's too many of them to be writ by honest men.

'But I've some grand news for you. I've found the minister for you, that married that feckless body, Peggie Jansen, years ago. It's Mr Dalrymple. He was a young mon then, or doubtless he'd a' remonstrated. He's in London now, and ready and willing to swear anything, affidavits and all. He's come all the way from the north o' Scotland, and won't be happy if he don't help to tell a few lies before he goes back again. He knew the coast of Inverness as soon as he saw it in my grand picture for the Royal Academy, painted from the sketches I made in Skye in the autumn. He's a judge of art, is Mr Dalrymple, and well enough for a minister. He says he's brought the parchments with him, and remembers the marriage weel, as it was the first he ever officiated at. Ye'd better speer your way to London, as soon as you can.

'Yours truly,

PETER MCGILP.'

The letter had an effect upon Bernhard Jansen, as might have been expected. He read it twice through, and then without a word gave it to Margaret, from whose face every particle of colour vanished as she proceeded line by line to unravel the meaning of the writer.

‘ You’d better pack your things too, Margaret. We’ll start to-night. There’s the diligence from Creveld will take us to Emerich, and we can go by the Rhine boat to-morrow by Rotterdam.’ Then he took hold of his daughter’s cold hand and led her down-stairs, where he poured out a large glass of his favourite Marcobrunner, which he regarded as a specific in most cases, and made her drink it. Then, in his newly-found hopes, he took her into his arms, and kissed her. He tried to get his face away in time, but before he could do so, one good heavy tear, worthy of a giant in trouble, fell upon his daughter’s cheek, and it is difficult to say which was the more astonished of the two. When a man only sheds a tear once in his life-time, it ought to be a large one.

Bernhard Jansen left his daughter at Keyser’s Hotel in Bridge-street, and took his way along Fleet-street towards the house of his friend McGilp. He had not been in London for some years, and though there was plenty on the way

to have arrested the attention of a less observant person, his mind was so preoccupied that he scarcely noticed any alteration until he reached St Giles's on the road to Newman-street. There he may be forgiven if his natural feelings were momentarily smothered in wonder at the changes that had taken place. Having first stared about him, and then asked his way of a policeman, he found himself in another ten minutes at his friend's door. It so happened that Mr McGilp was engaged with a gentleman, but Jansen was received by his friend with marked *empressement*, and with some difficulty accommodated with a seat that would hold him. This was accomplished by means of a chair, which was ascertained first by experiment to be sound on the legs, though short of one arm, possibly with a view to admitting the broad back of the burly Dutchman.

McGilp's wig was this time not in his pocket, but hanging on a peg ; and his coat was near it : the worthy painter feeling himself less embarrassed in this light conversational order, for the business on which he was engaged. He was also in his sitting-room, which looked upon some dingy leads and the back of a row of houses, not calculated to distract attention.

Mr Dalrymple, who occupied the second chair

in the room, the artist having dusted a box for his own accommodation, was a thin, absent-looking man, with pale cheeks, long sandy hair, and, strange to say, bright dark-brown eyes, which gave to his face a brilliancy in contrast with his quiet, placid features. Your first impression might have been of a man thoughtful on any subject but that on which he was momentarily engaged; and on worldly matters you would have been right. He was simple and unspeculative to a fault, totally unsuspicious of wrong, and generally wandering far from his subject in realms of thought more in accordance with his inclinations. But looking attentively at him you would have believed what was true—that in his profession he was zealous, truthful, impassioned, and clear-sighted; and he was so in matters to which he could be got to give a willing attention.

The circumstances of Margaret's early marriage had had this influence upon him; hence his visit to London, as unusual and as distasteful as a thing well could be; inconvenient as to pocket and time.

'A fortunate meeting,' said McGilp, introducing the two. Jansen bowed solemnly and respectfully to the minister of Knockmackiltie, who unfolded a long thin body with equal

solemnity, and then resumed his seat. Not having apparently caught the name, Mr Dalrymple remained passive in feature as in speech.

‘This is the gentleman, Mr Dalrymple, in whose daughter’s marriage you have taken so much interest.’ Mr Dalrymple’s whole face changed.

‘It was a happy providence, sir, that threw the “West of Scotland Gazette” in my way. We don’t see much of newspapers in my part; just the “Sutherland Advertiser,” and, maybe, the “Perthshire Chronicle” once in a way.’

‘And you can give the desired information, Mr Dalrymple?’ inquired Jansen, with as little apparent feeling as if he was asking about the crops.

‘Indeed, sir, I can. I have the most vivid recollection of every circumstance. Margaret Jansen was staying with Mistress McWheedle for a month or six weeks in the year 1842.’

‘True,’ ejaculated Bernhard Jansen, calmly.

‘If residence was wanted under the circumstances they would both have fulfilled it; for Mr Fellowes was then on a tour preparing for his university examination, and lived in the same parish, in the Isle of Skye, for almost as long a period as your daughter. I’m no lawyer, as my

friend, Mr McGilp, will testify, Mr Jansen—'

'Deed, and you're not, Mr Dalrymple; I take ye for an honest man.'

'But I've taken great pains to ascertain the facts, and everything was done in order. The parties were of age; for the young man brought me the certificates. His proper name, I find, was Falcon, but he was known under the name of Fellowes, George Fellowes, for a small property, said the McWheedles, that a relation of that name had left him. I saw him two years after in the same place.'

When Jansen heard the name of Falcon, he rose rather hastily from his seat, seemed about to speak, and then resumed his seat again. Suddenly he recollected himself, and said, 'Ay, true, true, sir,—G. F.; he always signed himself G.F.' I don't know whether I mentioned before, that all the early notes which had been written by Margaret's lover to her, had from prudential, perhaps in the first instance dishonourable, motives, borne the initials only, many of which had been intercepted and destroyed by Bernhard Jansen.

'And do you mean to say, Mr Dalrymple, that all the needful certificates and documents to prove a real and legitimate marriage are forthcoming?'

'Sir,' said that gentleman, 'you know the

laws of marriage in Scotland are different from those of England. In both it is but a civil contract of its nature and necessity ; but in this case I have ascertained, and can put into your hands the proofs of a marriage as binding as if it had been performed by a bishop in Westminster Abbey. They're at your service, and you shall have them whenever you'll ask for them.'

'You'll be wanting to see a writer or a lawyer,' said McGilp; 'and if you've ony money about you, you'd better leave it behind.'

Jansen took from his pocket a large memorandum-book, and after a short search produced an address which he read,—Dryden and Swallow, Carlton Chambers, Regent-street. It's an address that was sent me by a gentleman that has taken an interest in my grandson, and I'll call upon him, if Mr Dalrymple will go with me. McGilp's no opinion of the lawyers.'

'The lawyers ain't worse than the laws. There's scarcely one that a clever man couldn't break with impunity ; and there's no doubt that the cultivation of intellect in this country gangs that gait. The better the lawyer the greater the rascal.'

'We must make use of the means that we've got, Mr McGilp ; and the expounders of bad laws



may be very good men ;' saying which Mr Dalrymple took up his hat, and in a few minutes he and his burly friend were on their way to Mr Dryden's chambers.

At a moment like this, Bernhard Jansen might have been forgiven for forgetting some of the marks of good breeding due to a stranger. He did, indeed, at first attempt to make some observations on the neighbourhood, its buildings, and the ordinary topics of the day, most likely to interest his companion : however, there is nothing very remarkable about Oxford-street into which they turned, or Jansen's mind was too preoccupied to continue its lucubrations on common subjects, for he found himself very quickly discussing the chances of proof of his daughter's marriage.

'Would the change of name make no difference, or create no difficulty ?'

'Of English law,' said Mr Dalrymple, 'on such a subject I cannot give an opinion. But in Scotland there can be no doubt of the legality of your daughter's marriage. They lived together after the ceremony in Scotland, and that, I believe, with the knowledge of the young lady's relations, and of their daughter, who witnessed the ceremony.'

Poor Jansen gave no marked sign of satis-

faction notwithstanding, for at that time he could not help reverting to the deception which had been practised upon him by his wife: a cruel return, it can hardly be said, for his kindness and confidence in her; but a penalty which he scarcely felt called upon to pay for what in him was rather a constitutional harshness than a studied ill-treatment. Of course there are two sides of viewing every question; and we may presume that had Mrs Jansen been still alive she would have had some explanation to give of the effect producible upon certain dispositions in women by persistent coldness or mistrust. The fact is, that consistent treatment of any kind is thrown away upon the majority of women, whose Virgilian characteristic of the '*varium et mutabile*' is incapable of meeting or appreciating it in a favourable form. It is pre-eminently the establishment of the three-cornered pegs in the round holes. Had Bernhard Jansen been sometimes indulgent and sometimes the reverse, there would have been a mutual confidence at propitious moments which might have saved him much temporary anxiety and half a life-time of woe. He was not a man to see this even now; perhaps our readers may, with benefit to themselves.

By the time they reached Dryden's chambers

near the Nelson column, they had fully discussed the subject; and Jansen's object in seeking the lawyer was to confide to him the circumstances of the whole story, and request his assistance in giving the requisite information to Harold Falcon with the least possible publicity and the greatest possible despatch. He had determined upon this, feeling sure that Lord Hawkestone's introduction would insure him a hearing by the person most capable of advising him with regard to Harold. His feelings must be consulted, and through the lawyer seemed the simplest way of getting at them.

But a very plain and insurmountable obstacle presented itself to him. Upon inquiring for Mr Dryden, that gentleman had gone into the country, his partner was out, and neither of his clerks knew his address. His absence was of uncertain length, depending on business of importance, and that was all that could be said. Many men, reticent by nature, find it impossible to turn from a step decided upon with deliberation. Their very firmness renders it difficult to forego the sort of pleasure they had anticipated: thus all apparent contradiction of character arises really from its consistency. Jansen had made up his mind to tell his story, and rather than be baulked

of his determination, he took hold of the arm of his companion, and poured into his astonished ear the secret of the second marriage, his wife's treachery or fear, his daughter's infirmity of purpose in acting out so vicious a plot, Harold Falcon's natural and immediate desertion, Lord Hawkestone's accidental interest in the son, who had been presumed to be Harold Falcon's heir, and the new features which the case had assumed now that they knew Harold Falcon's position in the world. Of course it would be just as dishonest to have concealed these facts, were Harold still an unknown gentleman, supposed to be of no determined position; but it was doubly needful to disclose them now that so painful and distressing a point in the history was likely to be cleared up; and when the distinguished name and blood of a long line of ancestors flowing in Harold's veins would otherwise be tarnished by the adoption of a son whose birth would be presumed to be base, but whose claim, as born in wedlock, it would be hard to dispute. The scandal, too, that must be raised, and the feelings of innocent people, were facts worthy of consideration, and of immediate arrangement.

‘Mr Dalrymple, you must give me your time and your assistance for the day.’

‘Willingly—the week, if you will ; but it must be as short a week as you can make it.’

‘It shall be as short as I can make it. Come with me to Grosvenor-square. We must try and find Captain Falcon.’

## CHAPTER XXI.

## MINISTRY TO A MIND DISEASED.

CAPTAIN FALCON was in town and at home. He was at that moment thinking of the manner in which he might introduce the subject at Hawkestone Castle. Like many men of his temperament he was still a moral coward; and though he had made up his mind that the honest course to pursue would be to acknowledge his unhappy position to Lord Falconberg, the knowledge of his uncle's character made him now, as it had made him for years, anxious to postpone the fulfilment of his determination as long as possible. But his own feelings towards Lady Helen, and Lady Helen's feeling towards him, to say nothing of his altered relationship to the title, had put considerable pressure upon him during the last few months.

He was sitting gloomily in the small room which he used for business, and for the books, papers, sticks, riding and driving whips, old

rating colours, and a favourite saddle, and other baccalaurian luxuries which he considered peculiarly his own. It was the room in which he and the old lord talked over improvements in the property since the death of Lord Hawkestone, and in which he was accustomed to smoke and chat with his old friends and brother Guardsmen, who came pretty constantly to see him whenever he and they were in town together.

He was now alone ; and in one of those doleful moods which we can scarcely be surprised at, even in a man of Harold's temperament, under the peculiar circumstances of his case. He found solace for the moment in a cigar.

To one determination he had steadily adhered : as it happened, fortunately. It was this : to let no hint escape him to George Fellowes of his possibly legal claim upon him, before he had spoken to his uncle. It was due to the old man to avoid all irritating additions to the painful facts of the case, and it left him free to take advantage of all risks, chances, or accidents, which might turn up. He was grateful to the Jansens that they had manifestly kept his secret, for he could not believe them ignorant of his great prospects, and of their own interests in them. He was very grateful to them for this. The

temptation was so strong that it might have broken down any promise given or implied under different circumstances, however he might feel that he had been swindled into a marriage of which the bare recollection was so terrible that it made him blush even as he sat by himself in his gloomy den, at the back of the house in Grosvenor-square. 'I don't understand it,' thought Harold: 'old Jansen certainly was an honest man in his way; a liberal one as far as I was concerned even in his nefarious usuries; and he has been true to his word in letting me live or die without interference, notwithstanding the different aspect of the case. How then could he have been such an infernal scoundrel as to palm off——bah! it's horrible to think of.' Here he got up and walked once or twice up and down the little room. 'The girl, poor girl! I suppose women will do anything rather than——well! such a treacherous piece of business as that was better than lying dank and dead at the bottom of the Isis: and it must have come to that. I wasn't much better than she; for I was robbing her of everything, money and all, and she only turned the tables on me: and after she had done the mischief she did try to repair it.



But Jansen ? of course he'd have sold his daughter—many people do,—but not such damaged goods as that, at all events. And if they do, why —' And here he smote the table so forcibly that it appeared to open the door of itself, and Mr Wrench, now transferred to Harold as his confidential valet, stood on the sill.

'Oh, is that you, Wrench ? come in, what is it ?' Mr Wrench respectfully held a card on a waiter. 'I said you were engaged, but the gentlemen said it was of the greatest importance, and that they would wait or call again.'

When Harold read the name of Jansen the coincidence was striking enough to call the blood with rapidity into his face. He stood irresolutely for a minute or two, looking at the card with a dark and ominous frown.

'The gentlemen !' said he. 'Are there two then ?'

'Yes, sir, one a very tall, stout old man, the other a clergyman, I should think, sir,—looks as if he'd come a-begging, sir.'

'Ask Mr Jansen to come in here alone. I'll see him alone first, Wrench.'

And Mr Wrench went away, and shortly returned, bringing in the giant alone. He closed

the door after him, and did not (as we are told in old plays that valets do) wait outside to listen to the conversation.

‘Jansen,’ said Harold, looking at the visitor with a flush still on his face.

‘Captain Falcon,’ said the visitor, but without approaching nearer.

‘You had better take a seat,’ and the old man took one, and leant forward in an embarrassed manner, while Harold still twirled the card in his hand.

‘You desire to speak with me?’

‘Yes,—on business that concerns you very nearly.’

‘Probably, after so many years. Though I think we came to an understanding.’

‘Circumstances have changed,’ said Bernhard Jansen. ‘Now,’ thought the other, ‘comes the reservation which I feared, the temptation has been too strong.’—‘Circumstances have changed, or I never would have troubled you no more. Had you come to me, Captain Falcon, to claim my daughter as your wife, you would—well, it’s well that you did not.’

‘I don’t see it in that light, if you are at liberty now to thrust her and her son upon me,’ said Harold Falcon. ‘Listen a moment,

Jansen ; it may yet be worth your while to wait. I am about consulting Lord Falconberg. It may be true that your daughter's son is legally my heir. It may be true. It is said that it is so ; and if that be the case I have no power to put him aside. I have not hitherto acted by him as if I would do so.' All this time Jansen sat with his mouth half opened with his ready explanation ; but he had no opportunity given him of beginning it. ' But I have heard that possibly the presumption being overruled by proof, or by your daughter's own confession, or by other circumstantial evidence, the law will not support your claim.'

' Stop, stop, Captain Falcon, you have not heard me yet.'

' Nor you me. I say that this will be tried. I will move heaven and earth to prevent an alien from usurping a position, which will cut off the line of a long ancestry, to build a false nobility upon their name and property. I know what you would say : the exposure ! When I was a mere scion of a noble race, myself unknown, with many between me and my present position, I would have shielded your daughter from the results of her misconduct and your treachery, and borne in silence the disgrace which my own ex-

travagance and recklessness had brought upon me. It is enough that I must live without any ties, but those which fortune has created for me. It has brought me nearer to those who were once far off from me. I did wrong, you have done worse ; and if shame and exposure await us, you must be content to take that much of it which the world will assuredly give you.' While Captain Falcon had been speaking, the perspiration had stood trembling on his forehead, and his hands had closed convulsively upon the card he held. As he concluded this part of his argument, he sat down in the arm-chair which he had occupied, and looked earnestly and sternly at the intruder.

Bernhard Jansen rose from his seat as Harold sat down. He was of a noble figure to look at, firm and colossal, with an open countenance and brow, his mouth and chin shadowed with a flowing grey beard and moustache. He kept his eyes bent, mildly but immovably, upon Harold, as he advanced towards the table near which he sat.

'You should have heard me first, sir. You have done me an injustice. I knew your position when you married my daughter. We drove a bargain, wrong enough, in all conscience, for us not to abuse one another now. But appearances are against me. Do you believe I am truthful ?

that I would not willingly say what is not true, though I sold her with some thousands to buy your name for her, such as it was?' Harold half rose involuntarily, but Jansen continued, 'Your pardon, Captain Falcon; you have been hard upon me. I forgot myself. Do you believe I would speak falsely?'

'No, no; not in so many words,' replied Harold honestly enough.

'Then I declare to you, upon my honour, I knew nothing of that which must have provoked your just scorn. I believed my daughter to be giddy, wilful, inconstant, but pure and innocent in the world's sense. I knew her to be beautiful, and to be able to supply the wants and necessities of a ruined man. I knew nothing more till it was too late.' Harold listened, strange to say, with a pleasure in believing that Jansen was speaking the truth. 'You have just talked of exposure. We did not dread it; for I declare to you that nothing should have induced us to make one single claim upon you. My daughter would have gone to her grave under the name she has chosen to assume and to give to her son. Her last deceit was practised upon you; and it was so wicked that she repented once and once for all. She will be no Lady Falconberg, nor her son

Lord Hawkestone.' Here Jansen paused for breath.

'But, Mr Jansen, as my wife's son—'

'He is not your son—'

'Granted; but you are not ignorant—'

'I am not ignorant of much, sir, which you must learn. Margaret Jansen is not your wife, nor is her son your heir.'

'By your forbearance,' said Harold, with some excusable irritation, thinking that for it he must be indebted to the man, and that even that would not remove the bar to his happiness.

'By the law, honestly, truly, legally, she is not your wife, and never has been.' Here it was Harold's turn to look puzzled, which he did, staring at Jansen for an explanation. And it came slowly and deliberately, word for word, with an apparent effort to make it as clear as it could be made. 'She never was your wife, for she was then married to another man.'

There followed upon this the explanation, which we need not repeat to the reader. It has already been given, and bore no marked difference in its manner of relation. It was interrupted by Harold Falcon, by expressions of surprise, by doubts, by questions. At length, when fairly told, with some apprehension for the

evidence of this joyful intelligence, then it was that Bernhard Jansen proposed to introduce his friend, of whose very existence Harold Falcon had become oblivious. Nothing could be clearer than that gentleman's corroboration. He stated times, places, names, and dates, which placed beyond all doubt the one grand fact that Margaret Jansen had been married, some twenty years before, to a gentleman calling himself Fellowes, in the west of Scotland; that they had lived there together afterwards, apparently by the permission of her relatives, and that at length they had disappeared from the stage together.

‘And in whose hands do you propose to leave the proofs of this marriage?’ said Harold, ‘and what steps will be necessary to re-establish your daughter in her privileges—to make your grandson his father's heir?’

‘Our object is to do an act of justice to you, as well as to her, Captain Falcon. It is desirable for all to avoid exposure as much as possible. Lord Hawkestone gave me the address of his lawyer, Mr Dryden, long ago, not foreseeing how much I might stand in need of his assistance. Shall I go to him? He knows something of our business; too much to be partially trusted. Will he act honourably in the steps we may want to

take, and prudently, for the discovery of this man, if necessary? I don't say that it will be necessary, but should it be so.'

Harold paused for a minute. He didn't like Dryden; but he knew of nothing to his disadvantage. It was a great thing to prevent exposure for himself and his family, and to select another would be a certain means of extending the knowledge, and probably of irritating Mr Dryden. Increased confidence must necessarily bind him closer to them, at all events secure him from active enmity. 'As you have already called upon Mr Dryden I should recommend your seeking any professional advice you may want from him.' Here the door opened once more, and Mr Wrench presented a telegram to Harold, then a less common means of communication than it is now.

'A boy is waiting in a cab at the door for you to sign the receipt, sir,' said Mr Wrench, not even looking at Messrs Jansen and Dalrymple, though having vague conjectures of Church-building or Curates' Funds in his mind.

Harold had looked at the despatch, and his face showed symptoms of agitation. His colour went and came, and when he had desired Wrench to put some luncheon on the table, he added, 'And put a few things into a portmanteau for



me, and call a cab as soon as it is done. I'm going down to Hawkestone immediately. You'll excuse me, gentlemen, I can be no assistance to you at this moment. Better go to Mr Dryden, as you had already determined upon doing. The cab, Wrench,' said he, twenty minutes later, after he had swallowed a mouthful. 'See that these gentlemen have everything. If I want you I'll write or telegraph. Jansen,' and he took him on one side. 'Establish these facts beyond all doubt, at once. There's my address. See Dryden. Find the man, this Mr Fellowes, and the world need be none the wiser. Spare no expense for all honest purposes. But for all our sakes let us avoid exposure. We have suffered enough without that.' Then he got into his cab and drove to the station. On his way he took the telegram out of his pocket. It was very laconic, very vague, very inexplicit but to Harold himself. It was from Hawkestone Castle—from Lady Helen Falcon to Harold Falcon, Esq. 'Come to me directly.' Nothing more, nothing less. She knew he would come—yes, any distance at any time. The case was clear. Lord Falconberg was dead, or stricken beyond recovery.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## HAROLD AT HOME.

THE effect produced upon Harold's mind by the explanation of Bernhard Jansen was strong enough to struggle with the interest excited by the receipt of the telegram. For the first time for something like twenty years he began to feel independent of a tie, which bound him to mystery, disgrace, and disappointment. It was a great and happy moment. In that moment he thought of sharing his secret with his cousin, Lady Helen. That it ought to be told to her, and to his uncle, he had no doubt. The acknowledgment of his own folly was painful, very painful; but it must be done; and in his worst days Harold was never deficient in that sort of justice which entailed punishment upon himself. Many men try to shirk it: Harold knew the cost incurred in it, and paid the penalty.

He had some doubts to resolve on his journey

down, and they occupied his time, not pleasantly if profitably.

First, was he really free, legally as well as morally, from this marriage which had entailed so much misery upon him? Secondly, if so, upon hearing the details of his former life, what would be the state of Lady Helen's feelings for him? It is so easy for women to forgive indiscretion, so hard to forgive deliberate heartlessness. Thirdly, if Lord Falconberg were ill or dying, how far was it necessary or expedient to make to him disclosures which would most undoubtedly accelerate his end? By the time he reached Hawkestone he had not resolved these doubts, and it is impossible to deny that they were very hard ones.

As he went down that afternoon, a certain gentleman with whom we have become acquainted went up. The trains met, and stood beside each other for a few minutes, but Harold Falcon and Mr Dryden did not see each other. Harold was conveyed on his way, and Mr Dryden returned to London, in time to receive Mr Jansen's card and to fix an interview for the morrow without fail. We must revert to it in its place: at present we follow Harold Falcon to the Castle.

When he reached the Lodge gates of the park it was dusk, and the first thing that struck him

on reaching the Castle was the absence of light in the windows. As soon however as the bell sounded through the lofty hall, a light showed itself, and Harold was received by the servants with the same alacrity as usual. Still it struck him that some feeling of solemnity pervaded the household; and the absence of the great chandelier, which was always lighted in the hall, added to his conviction. He had no time, had he felt any inclination, to question the servant in attendance, for Lord Falconberg's own man, Mr Markham, met him at the foot of the great staircase, and immediately preceded him to the library.

‘Markham, where's Lady Helen?’

‘She's in her own room, sir; perhaps you've not heard on the road nor at the Lodge gates, Lord Falconberg is—’ Harold knew now quite well what Mr Markham was going to say.

‘No, I heard nothing at the Lodge gates, they were open. You mean my uncle is given over?’

‘Your uncle, my Lord, is dead.’ Markham, who had lived with the late earl for some years, felt as much as dependants do feel on such occasions. But earls are like kings and do not die generally, and households don't disperse; and in this case there was some one to succeed, and Markham remembered that. It was the first time Harold

had been called 'my Lord,' and it struck upon his ear somewhat harshly, grated just a little. To say he was astonished is not true. The fact is, he had thought of the possibility coming down.

'Dead, Markham! I hardly thought that.' It's customary with the best of men to say this. 'I had no intelligence, and fancied it might be sudden illness, paralysis, or something of that kind. Was it very sudden?'

'It was very sudden, my Lord;' Markham never forgot anything. 'Doctor Spence is in the house now; but he was dead long before the doctor came.'

'I should like to see him, Markham.'

'Doctor Spence, my Lord, or—?'

'Doctor Spence, of course,' said Harold, whom we must now call Lord Falconberg.

Doctor Spence was the country practitioner who had always attended at the Castle. He was in reality an M.D., but a good practice which he inherited from his father, as an apothecary, had restrained his ambition; and he continued to exercise his calling, beloved and respected, as thousands of such men are, and with talents and experience fitted for a higher sphere. In every case the family physician must be a friend, and there is no class of professional men in the world

so worthy of the position ; no men who so rarely do discredit to the trust reposed in them. The case with your country practitioner is not so frequent, but would be equally admissible. There is a kindness or generosity amongst them, which is only known to those who have the opportunity of thoroughly testing them. The medical student as depicted by Mr Dickens and his besotted followers, is not an amiable man. His pictures may be true or may be false. Our experience does not lie with the Bob Sawyers and the Benjamin Allens of the school, but it acknowledges publicly and gratefully the many kindnesses of those who are always ready to soothe pain, mental or bodily, among the poor as among the rich, and that with equal attention, and at a minimum of remuneration for their education, labour, and expenses.

‘ This is sad intelligence for you, Harold,’ said Doctor Spence, who had known him from childhood, and had formed a tolerable estimate of his character.

‘ It is, Doctor ; not altogether unexpected. Lady Helen’s telegram gave me sufficient cause for apprehension. I thought, however, I might still find my good old uncle alive. How did it really happen at last ?’

‘ You know his friend Dryden was here, and with him at the last moment.’

‘ I did not know of Dryden’s visit. What was its object?’

‘ Ah, that I can’t say. It might have been prudent or imprudent to have transacted business of any kind in your uncle’s state. A mere ordinary subject, or the settlement of his affairs in any way, was not likely to have produced the catastrophe ; extraordinary news affecting him, on the other hand, was very likely to have produced it. He was an old man, had lived out his threescore years and ten ; had had his sorrows, losses, and lately a very severe one. He was an active man, and as far as active pursuits are concerned a healthy one ; but he has been long subject to disease of the heart ; and sudden shock, I could almost say surprise, was attended with risk. Now, Harold, do you know of anything which could have probably produced such a result?’

Until that very morning Harold did not know of anything ; but Jansen had opened his eyes to the fact that Dryden knew a portion of his own history. Was it not possible, even probable, that he had come down to consult with Lord Falconberg or to inform him of the result of some investigations of his own ?

‘Yesterday I did not, to-night I do. Though why Dryden should have come down to talk about it, I can’t tell. It’s a curious thing, Doctor Spence. Dryden did know something which I have been more than once prevented from telling my uncle, lately on account of his health. But I had determined just now that I ought to tell him ; and have possibly been saved from the pain which Dryden feels now at having done so.’ Harold then did the best thing he could do. He took the Doctor entirely into his confidence. ‘And how about my cousin Lady Helen?’

‘Ah, you mustn’t say a word to her just now. It can make no earthly difference to her if she never knows a word about it. They may find this first husband, and then there will be no necessity for exposing the proofs,’ said Doctor Spence. ‘There’s plenty of time before you. You’ll go to her now, I suppose. She wants to see you. Before I go, Harold, however, I must shake hands with you as the new Lord Falconberg. I have lost an old and kind friend, for whom I shall grieve ; let me be glad in welcoming an old friend in his place.’ Saying which the good Doctor was about to take his leave.

‘But, Doctor Spence, tell me how it all happened ; I wish to spare Helen all the pain of talk-



ing about the subject that I can. She has had her father only to depend upon since Hawkestone's death, and will feel the loss terribly.' The doctor might have his own notions about the only friend on whom Lady Helen had to depend, but he replied to the first part of the question :

'Dryden came down here to lunch, was with the late peer and Lady Helen for half-an-hour. They walked about the garden, chatting cheerfully enough. Then the two went into his lordship's room, where he transacts business generally. They had been there ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, when the bell rang violently : Markham rushed in, and found his master fainting, at his last gasp. Lady Helen was sent for, but he was unable to recognize her ; and long before I got here he was dead. Nothing could have saved his life. He died, undoubtedly, of a sudden spasm of the heart. Dryden would have waited to see you, but unfortunately he was telegraphed for to town on business, having been away longer than he intended, and left reluctantly. I have remained with Lady Helen. She wants to see you, I know ; but perhaps you had better ring for her maid. Good night, my lord.'

Mrs Prince was a good woman of forty years of age. Not one of your dapper, neat, pretty women, all ribbons, and smiles, and cast-off caps and finery: nothing at all like your operative soubrette, or the flighty little flirt that fills the post in a fashionable novel or light comedy, but a handsome, well-dressed, and staid person of forty years of age, devotedly attached to the house of Falconberg in general, and to her mistress in particular, with whom she had lived ever since she was out. Mrs Prince came down to Harold at once, from the melancholy occupation of looking out some black dresses from her lady's wardrobe, until proper mourning could be prepared.

Mrs Prince had been crying, as was natural. She had already managed to mount a black silk dress, and a cap with black ribbons in it: a very fine and broadly-bordered handkerchief was in her hand. Harold inquired after Lady Helen, and Mrs Prince gave a satisfactory account of her. She was not a woman herself of extraordinary feeling, nor did she pretend to it. Neither did she pretend to it for her mistress, any more than for herself: so she said,

‘Lady Helen is more herself than she was, my Lord. She bears up against it pretty well.

It was sudden : and though her father died in her ladyship's arms, as you may say, he was unable to speak to her. Dr Spence stayed with her till you came down, my Lord, and he left her more cheerful. She'll be very glad to see you, Mr Harold ; it always did her good.' And after this terrible slip of the tongue for a well-conducted woman, Mrs Prince applied her handkerchief to her eyes, not, as in many cases, to conceal what was not there, but to stop an honest tear or two which made their way in favour of her mistress.

Harold would willingly have gone to her before ; but, with the hesitating love of a man of his age, he feared to intrude. You see, he had been in love with his cousin for fifteen years. For fifteen years he had never dared to breathe it to a living soul. Yet all that time circumstances had prevented him from telling a tale, which would have possibly broken off close relations with her family, and certainly have spared Lord Hawkestone and Lord Falconberg many a vain hope of what was not to be fulfilled in their days. The number of times he had made up his mind to cry quits with his conscience, and tell them his story, and had been stopped by untoward circumstances, was marvellous : even al-

lowing for his own natural vacillation. This very day he had made up his mind to make a clean breast of it : and then he hears the joyful truth, and dares not tell that even. At the very moment Lord Falconberg dies, and Helen is certainly not in a position to listen to any such confession.

‘Wait, wait, wait,’ says the new lord to himself. ‘I’m sick of waiting.’ And with these thoughts he was ushered into the Lady Helen’s presence.

I have said that Lady Helen Falcon was very beautiful. It was a beauty, too, so peculiarly English as to be enhanced by time. Character and intelligence marked every feature, which yet had not lost the freshness of youth. She had made no change in her dress, less thoughtful on such a subject than her own maid. It was always handsome and rich in material, affecting nothing of girlhood : it was so now ; but as usual, of rather sombre colouring, contrasting well with her clear, pale complexion, and the delicate tracery of her features.

‘Harold,’ and she rose, and held out both her hands to her cousin. He took them both in his, and with an almost involuntary movement drew her towards him and kissed her forehead.

‘It is very good of you to have come so soon ; but I was sure you would do so. I was so entirely alone when it happened ; the duchess and Lady Di left us last week, and, excepting Doctor Spence, I have no neighbour here.’ While Lady Helen said this, her eyes were filled with tears, but she behaved as women of sense and feeling do behave on such occasions ; she used the former to keep in check the latter : and succeeded.

‘Of course I came at once. I could only conclude by your telegram that something of this kind was the matter. Doctor Spence has told me all.’ This he said to save Helen the pain of repeating what he knew already. ‘To-morrow I think you must let me write to your aunt, or will you go to the duchess, Helen ? You can’t stay here. Let me write to your aunt.’ And then they two, loving one another, and having loved for years, discussed the convenience of Lady Helen’s movements, as though their hearts were not bursting ; the one to console, the other to be consoled. When men err they never know the extent to which their error may reach. It is like a stone dropt into the water, whose first ripples only catch the eye, and as the circles increase in size, they so decrease in strength, that few heed them after the first plunge.

It was soon decided between them, that for the present Lady Helen should go to her aunt's, and that she could easily there make what arrangements suited her best for her permanent residence. Not yet knowing the contents of Lord Falconberg's will, there was no necessity to discuss that point. At length Helen said to him,

‘Harold, I should like to see my dear father once more.’ A few tears very silently ran down Lady Helen's cheeks. Doctor Spence had recommended her not to try herself just yet by so severe an ordeal, so had Mrs Prince, but neither the one nor the other knew her as Harold did. If she desired it, he believed it to be best.

‘Come then, Helen, let us go together,’ and taking her by the hand he led her from the room in which they had been sitting. He lit a single candle himself, on the landing of the great staircase, that there might be no interference of the household; and in another minute they were in the late lord's room, where he was now lying, the empty image of his former self.

Harold and Lady Helen looked long and silently upon the face of their lost friend and protector: she at first without a tear; while through his mind ran the scenes in which they three had

borne parts from his boyhood. His ill-fated marriage, which was no marriage ; the late lord's wishes, so well understood by him though unexpressed ; Hawkestone's long and sincere friendship, and his own many years of reticence on the subject which lay so near all their hearts. It takes long to say that all this had come from Harold Falcon's youthful extravagance ; it was not many seconds in asserting its rights in his mind. Less quickly, but not less surely, came the suggestion that perhaps his uncle might still have been alive but for Dryden's visit ; and a very vivid suspicion of its purport and the irreparable mischief done presented itself. When he thought of his cousin Helen in connection with these things, he was for a moment unable to control himself, and despite her presence Harold wept, as he had not wept since he was a child.

They stood side by side, and Helen felt rather than saw Harold's tears rising. She felt his struggles to suppress them, and the passionate tightening of his hold upon her hand, until he put his own hand to his face and his self-upbraiding broke forth in a half-suppressed groan. Then Helen looked up at him, and as he shook with agitation, thinking almost aloud ' my punishment has been too great,' she disengaged her hand, and

putting them both upon his shoulders laid her head upon his bosom, while he drew her nearer to himself, and over the corpse of the late earl whispered such words of comfort as a life of love now first finding utterance could suggest. When at length, having knelt together by the side of the old man for some time, they rose, there was a calm, not unallied to happiness, in Helen's face, for she knew she would not be alone in the world so long as Lord Falconberg was alive.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

## SWEEPING OUT THE CORNERS.

MR DRYDEN returned to town, and the first consideration was to secure an interview with Bernhard Jansen. It was not long in being brought to a close, for at eleven o'clock on the day after his arrival, and while Harold was making arrangements for the late Lord Falconberg's funeral, and for Lady Helen's removal from the house of mourning, he and his daughter were ushered into a private room in Charlton Chambers. A long and very interesting conversation there took place on the subject of Margaret's first marriage, and the end arrived at by Dryden was one which gave unmixed satisfaction to them all. They all were actuated by like motives. Dryden's own wish was clear enough. Actuated by the mammon of unrighteousness, but restrained by a common regard for reputation, he was urged to give an acute mind to the furtherance of the desire of the reigning Lord Falconberg. He had acted with no love

for Harold Falcon, but with an intention to do what was right by the late lord and his family. Even a live dog is better than a dead lion; but a live lion! *a fortiori*. Lord Falconberg and he must still be friends. He meant to secure himself. All great people, every great house, had its skeleton. The business of the lawyer was to keep it under lock and key.

Jansen, to be truthful on that subject, cared for nothing but the establishment of his daughter's marriage. If he had ever been ambitious for her, it was not after the fashion of this world's ambition. That his grandson should be the legitimate son of his daughter and her husband would satisfy him, and he was one of those practical men that would make the best of irremediable evil. He did not even speculate on whether that husband would be found, and whether when found he would be worth the trouble of the search. Could his previous existence and Dalrymple's facts be proved to his own conviction? That was to him the great point, and there seemed to be no doubt about it now.

Margaret's feelings were of the complex order, and no wonder. She remembered her first lover, the man for whom she had sacrificed everything but her bare self-respect taken at its lowest point ;

and she remembered him still with affection. That feeling of affection increased with every moment which brought her nearer to the possibility of seeing him again. Her life, since his desertion, had been a dream—a vivid, wakeful dream, a sort of existence apart from that which should have been hers. A parenthetic life from the days of her first marriage to the time when a hope of return to the old and proper one had slowly dawned upon her. She had sacrificed to her wilful and wayward love, her home, her father, her truth, and so far her reputation ; but not in its lowest sense. She knew she had fallen far from her high estate of maidenly reserve and purity, but she had not fallen below recovery. And though it had been delayed for a long time, it had begun to re-appear. If her father had doubted her for years, he did so no longer. Accident had revealed what a long search, necessarily carried on with caution, had not been able to discover.

Her feelings for Lord Falconberg, mixed up as he had been in her fate, were those of kindly indifference. So much the better. She need never see him more. He had acted in all the unfortunate occurrences of her life with gentlemanly consideration, even with magnanimity, as she thought. Harold himself knew that his motives

would not bear conscientious scrutiny. He had done what he had with a sincere desire to bury the whole in oblivion for his own sake ; and at the time he had no notion of the penalty he would have to pay. He had rushed into the arms of an ill-fated marriage recklessly, he had withdrawn from it, naturally, coldly, cursing his ill-luck, Jansen's cruelty, and Margaret's dishonesty. He had just managed to be a trifle lenient, because she had refused to allow him to adopt as his own the child of another man.

Dryden, if an unprincipled man, was a clear-sighted one. He talked over some of these matters and saw them all. He had seen something more. Since his interview with George Falcon he had had strange doubts come over him, as to that cynic's career. He put a great many things together after that interview ; and compounded them with that gentleman's suggestive questions as to the possibility of his marriage, of his being already married, of heirship, kinship, and other matters of a like kind. He knew something too of human nature. He did not believe in George Falcon's philosophy, in his indifference to women, in his absorption, in his exclusive acquisitiveness. He saw a crotchety mind, not a hardened nature, in his eccentricities. He knew that almost every

one had a soft place for a woman, if the right woman was to be met with ; and he saw no reason why George Falcon should not have made a secret marriage as well as Harold. It was George's own suggestion, and since then the lawyer had been reasoning on it.

‘ Now, Mr Jansen, will you put on your hat and walk with me to Temple Bar ? ’ Jansen, having confidence in the lawyer, assented at once.

‘ And my daughter ? ’ said he, wondering whether she was to be sent back to Keyser's Hotel or to be kept in Mr Dryden's sitting-room.

‘ Shall go with us, ’ replied he, after a moment's consideration. ‘ Tomkins, send the office boy round the corner for a four-wheeler. ’

Having threaded the omnibusses and upturned paving-stones about St Clement's and Somerset House without accident, they reached the Temple, down which they walked, the cabman having bitten the half-crown to ascertain its value before giving the change.

At the bottom of George Falcon's staircase they met with a woman, whose bonnet, even for six years ago, was more outrageous in its size than the present fashion for its smallness.

‘ My good woman, I wish to leave this lady down-stairs, if I can place her anywhere for ten

minutes. If not she must go up with us.' The old woman opened a door on the left, on which was painted Mr Serjeant O'Butterton, saying, with a quickly dropped curtsey which she as quickly picked up again,

'The lady is welcome to these rooms, sir, as long as is convenient. The Serjeant's down at the 'sises, and won't be back till the day after to-morrow.'

Jansen and his legal adviser walked up-stairs, and knocked at Mr George Falcon's door. The name struck Jansen as odd, but he said nothing, possibly thinking the more.

'Mr Falcon will be in in ten minutes or less, sir,' said his clerk. 'He desired me to say so if any one called ;' at the same time he ushered them into the barrister's room and left them.

They had been in the room a few minutes, when one took up the paper and the other a law book and began to read. Dryden got tired of his book, and walking up to the shelves he took down and opened another, which by its back professed to treat of a subject at that moment rather interesting to him, 'On the law of marriage in Scotland.' He turned over a page or two, and was about closing it after reading an opinion which he wanted, when from between the leaves there

dropped upon the ground what looked like a piece of paper. On picking it up it proved to be, however, a piece of ivory which had fallen out of its envelope.

Lawyers are perhaps less curious in matters irrelevant than other people. Their ingenuity and curiosity is usually kept for state occasions to be paid for ; seldom aired for nothing. Dryden however may be excused for an almost involuntary breach of that article of faith. The back of this thin piece of ivory was presented to his eye as he picked it up, and he incontinently turned it round.

A lawyer too ought not to be given to sudden surprises. I have seen such in court on the face of Serjeant Buzfuz or Mr Starleigh, but I knew they were paid for,—just as I have seen old Mr Kean tear his laced collar in Sir Giles Overreach, or Mr Macready grow livid at the sight of a dagger, but I knew they were paid for it. Now Mr Dryden's present look of astonishment was perfectly gratuitous, he was neither selling a sentiment nor acting a part. First he started, then he looked closely at the ivory, then he took up his double eye-glasses, and then he walked round to Mr Jansen, and throwing the thing down on a leading article of the *Times*, arrested the Dutch-

man's attention. He went through the same pantomime as his companion, losing colour as he continued his examination, until it returned to him again, when he put his first question, 'Where did you get this?'

'Out of that book. It's your daughter?'

'It is,' said Jansen, 'when she was young. Strange she should have changed so little,' and Jansen continued to look at it.

'Where did it come from?' said Dryden again.

'I painted it myself,' replied the other.

'You did? humph,' ejaculated the lawyer, 'then how the devil did it get here?'

As this question was not readily answered, and could only be answered by two people on earth, both held their peace. At length Jansen replied, 'I missed it years ago when we were in Oxfordshire, but thought nothing more about it. I presume that Margaret can tell,' and the old man was proceeding towards the door. At the moment a latch-key was placed in it, it turned on its hinges, and Margaret stood before her father leaning on the arm of a man he had never seen before. Dryden had; and addressed him at once as George Falcon.

The confusion incident to such a meeting, if great, was short-lived. George Falcon stood up



before the lawyer and his new client, and acknowledged Margaret as his wife. It was he who had known her and loved her at Woodstock, who had persuaded her to marry him in Scotland, who had been assisted by the girl's own mother in deceiving her father, who had left her after a time to come to England. It was George Falcon who had written to her as G.F., but whose letters were intercepted by Bernhard Jansen, the answers to which were destroyed and the inquiries after whom were unsuccessful by reason of his assumed name. Then he came again into Oxfordshire; but his wife and all trace of her was gone. No one knew whither; where or how could her husband apply, and yet preserve the incognito on which his fortune and his position appeared to depend? But when at length the fortune came, and he might have proclaimed his marriage with the dread of nothing worse than a sneer, where was the wife for whom he would willingly have allowed the world to laugh? Nowhere: not to be found. He tried Nuremberg, to no purpose. He tried Scotland, to just as little. As to the names or abode of his wife's relations he knew no more of them than the man in the moon. Then came the calls, not of ambition, but of avarice; and he had learnt to forget what he no

longer regarded as within his reach. Suddenly he had found it again, and in what a singular place, —in the chambers of his friend Mr Serjeant O'Butterton, of the Inner Temple.

As his clerk had said, he was expected home every minute, and as he returned within a few minutes of the Jansens' arrival he would certainly have saved his clerk's credit, but for one circumstance. Calling loudly to O'Butterton, and receiving no answer, he kicked open the door, which was ajar, and entered. Seeing only a lady with her back to him, he was about to retire.

But the voice had attracted Margaret's attention ; and she turned round suddenly, looking fixedly at the speaker. She advanced towards a table, which stood between them, and as every vestige of colour left her cheeks, she pronounced simply, somewhat uncertainly, his name—'George Fellowes.' It was he : there he stood, after so many years, silent and confounded. In a moment, however, he recovered himself, and walking round to her and taking both her hands into his, he said, 'You are my wife.' There was no strong emotion in the manner of his words or the tone of his voice ; but he drew her slowly but firmly towards him, and as he kissed her he felt her tears dropping rapidly from her eyes. Then he placed

her in a chair, and leaning over her affectionately, gave her time for recovery.

Neither of these persons were by nature demonstrative, and by the time she had explained the accident which had brought her there, and the presence of her father and Mr Dryden upstairs, they were enabled to rally sufficiently to leave the room together.

‘Come with me, Margaret; we have been many years in finding one another. From to-day we are one.’ He drew her arm within his arm, and in that manner they had met her father.

Is the reader surprised that the whole catastrophe should have thus passed over, without more tears, more fainting, more sentiment? He does not take into consideration the character or circumstances of the man. Love, that passionate devotion of youth, which makes up for all deficiencies, and outstrips the strength of manhood, had been dying within both for years. The two had been to each other as though they were not; and lower instincts had asserted themselves in the man. He was awake again; but it would take time to bring back the old feeling, if it ever could revive. He knew that he could devote himself to his old love for the rest of his life: he could make her some amends for the long years

of accidental neglect : they would be now better lovers than two-thirds of those whose sentiment had settled down into an ordinary respectability ; whose affection had smoothed and polished itself into an indulgence of mutual prejudice. He was a quick-witted person, and saw before him more happiness than he had dreamed of even in the acquisition of his darling gold. She was going to rescue him from that meanness, and to perform the conventional mission of woman, in giving him a worthier crown than that with which he would have decorated his own head when it should have become hoary with age, or bowed with increasing infirmity. He had sense enough and feeling enough left to see all this ; and he was thankful, as a shipwrecked mariner ought to be. They had lost much time ; but, though their day had been clouded, their sunset might yet be bright and cheerful, if they would but care to make it so.

Details are stupid when they have only to relate the natural and inseparable accidents of such a termination to a story. Of course they went abroad, of course they looked for peace and quiet and retirement. Time enough to return to England when business or policy should remind them of those ties which, in George Fal-

con's case, it was impossible to ignore. Was not he his cousin's natural heir; was not his son a possible future Lord Falconberg? It is but justice to say that he did not forget this, though little was said at first upon the subject. Lord Falconberg himself was left in no ignorance of the turn that affairs had taken; and when it was generally known that George Falcon, barrister-at-law, had made the most of a *mésalliance*, contracted when young in opposition to his family; that he had been married twenty years, that he had a son grown up, and had left his profession, with a very good income derivable from his exertions in it, there remained but little curiosity in this busy world to know anything more about it.

If we did but consider of how very little consequence we are to such a world as that in which we live, in the great battle of life where everybody is fighting for himself, it would be the better for some of us. Smith thinks it would be a sad thing to retire to a smaller house, or to put down his carriage, because Jones would talk about it. Jones would talk about it. He would crack a prawn at a Greenwich dinner, and say, 'The Smiths have come to grief. I'm sorry for Smith: he was a deuced good fellow;' to which

Robinson would add, 'So was his wife:' and they would never be mentioned again.

George Falcon owed no man anything; and his fashionable acquaintances had not heard of him for years.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## THE LAST CORNER SWEEP.

I CANNOT insult people by asking them to wade through the details of a twelvemonth with me. Lord Falconberg had settled quietly and easily into his new seat. I don't know how I should have described him as springing suddenly from debt and difficulty into an earldom and vast fortune; but his gradations from lieutenant and captain in the Guards to pauper, gambler, ruined spendthrift, freedman (at a terrible expense), and back by slow degrees of respectability to friend of the family, kinsman, right-hand-man, and presumptive heir, makes the supposition of his graceful accession easy of conception. The year passed as usual. The disease in the grouse appeared as usual; it's bound to do so to the consternation of landlords and disappointment of tenants. The ministerial dinner, as of old. White-bait the size of prawns, and prawns the size of white-bait: but what should a patriot know

about eating and drinking? There were the complimentary speeches which we all address to our opponents on the hustings, and off them. Lord Falconberg went to Leicestershire for the winter, and spent the frosts with his cousin Helen at old Lady Julia's. Why not? Where should a man spend a frost but on slippery ground? The covers, too, were shot, not only at Hawkestone but elsewhere; and the true sportsmen were unusually indignant, as was natural, when the one bags twelve brace and the other forty. The true sportsman died with the introduction of Australian gold, railroads, and breech-loaders. *Requiescat in pace.*

ευφημει· τον ολωλοτ' υποσχιος εν χθονι κεισθω·

*Clarke's Irish Melodies.*

I'm afraid there's a forcible government of an accusative in this line; but for want of a better, let it be.

Spring came, and the London season. Titiens was singing now, not Grisi: Mario struggled on, and made a fine run of it. Things were altered since last year. The Atlantic telegraph had failed, and was not yet successfully laid. Overend, Gurney, and Company was yet—well! what shall I call it?—solvent—that won't offend anybody,



but those who have lost by them : and the Crasham and Turn-over yet shielded itself behind an ominous director, Mortem Peto. All sorts of things had happened in the Derby : a three-year-old looked so like a four-year-old, that he was ordered to be examined—clearly a gross insult to his owner : and a new line of boxes had been added to the Ascot Grand-stand, that what Tom Tug calls ‘the great city ladies’ might have a view. Oh ! for the times when there was no stand, no boxes, no lawn, no crowd, no dust, noise, nor betting-ring, and when we walked up and down between the races ‘to see and to be seen.’ There’s a great moral in the mercenary showman’s advice : ‘Stand down and don’t breathe upon the glasses, you young rascals what hasn’t got any money in your pockets for to pay, and let the sweet little dears, with twopence in their hands, come up.’ It’s the twopence that does everything in this world, whatever blue-blood may think of the matter.

The villa in Egmont was to be put into perfect order on the first of June, for Lord Falconberg and his bride were coming to pass the honeymoon at his cottage. The *Times* and the *Post* had announced his marriage for the twenty-fifth, and they wereright. On that morning St George’s,

Hanover Square, was full to overflowing, for though the world knew nothing of the real circumstances of the case, as the reader now has them for the first time, it had got up a curiosity to see the man who was once sixth from the succession, and the lovely cousin who, then almost a child, had waited till he was in a position to marry her. 'What self-control, what prudence, what constancy!' says Mrs Slowtop. 'What nonsense, what cowardice, what want of faith!' says Mrs Quicksilver. 'Why didn't they marry before?' says Miss Crumpet. 'Why the devil do they marry now?' says old Crusty.

'They're the handsomest couple in London,' said the Duchess of Merrivale, as she watched them posting away from old Lady Julia's house in Brook-street for Egmont.

'For their age, dear,' said her daughter, Lady Elizabeth, herself a beauty and about to be married to Farina, who was much her senior.

'For any age, my dear,' said her mother; 'Lady Helen's is a beauty that a few years could never impair. She'll be young till she's sixty; and as to Lord Falconberg, he's younger than Farina, and the handsomest man in London.' This was a little savage on the part of the duchess, but it was true, and duchesses do not like to be taken

to task even by their own daughters. At least her Grace of Merrivale did not.

Egmont was in a state bordering on bewilderment. It had submitted to every sort of fashionable tyranny but to that of a living member of the peerage in its immediate circle. Now he was come, with his Countess, to his own villa, which had belonged to him when he was simply Captain Falcon, nobody at all. This was nuts for Egmont to crack; and as Egmont went up to London by the train every morning, it was likely that it would be made to feel its importance. 'And how is the earl?'

'So you've Lord Falconberg among you.' 'Lady Falconberg's a charming person; my uncle knew her grandmother, years ago, of course.' 'Not in her bridal bonnet on Sunday! that's rather extraordinary, isn't it?' 'Quite put Sir Samuel's nose out of joint, I suppose,' but this was said confidentially.

From that time Lord Falconberg made Egmont an occasional home for the Countess during the season. It was a pleasant change from London, and they made themselves thoroughly beloved in the parish. Lady Helen's *ritualistic* habits of visiting the sick and clothing the poor without ostentation, that is, in her usual silks and satins

and five-guinea bonnets, had not deserted her, and though Lord Falconberg performed his duties, as M. F. H. at Hawkestone Castle, the ——shire hounds never wanted a hundred pounds while he was master of the villa.

We know the communication between Sir Samuel Cripplegate's dressing-room and that of his wife. I once detailed a conversation between the two, another will tend to clear up matters.

‘My dear,’ and he popped his head into my Lady's room after his bath; he was glowing with friction, as is usual after that process. ‘My dear, what's to be done about Isabella and that young man?’

‘What that painter fellow, Sir Samuel!’ and she laughed scornfully, and tossed her back-hair, what there was left of her own, rather wildly, ‘don't let me hear his name mentioned. I've no opinion of your High Art.’

‘It's all very well to abuse 'Igh Art, Lady Cripplegate, but you must hear his name mentioned. We've been playing fast and loose with him, that's about the truth of it. It ain't fair upon Bella; and I love Bella better than I hate the painter. He's a good sort o' chap, and he can't help it, I suppose, if Lady Falconberg has got a little boy. It ain't his fault.’

‘Then it’s his misfortune, Sir Samuel; and people must pay for their misfortunes. If you choose to listen to all the cock-and-bull stories of that old idiot Dryden, you may take the consequences. My daughter isn’t going to marry a runaway painter, and spend her life knitting stockings and making potato salads. As long as he was Lord Falconberg’s heir it was all very well,—now he isn’t, why, she won’t have him with my consent.’

‘Then, my dear, if Bella’s anything like yourself, I’m half inclined to think she’ll have him without. Come, old lady,’ and having by this time got into his pantaloons, and appearing with a pair of Mr Mechi’s brushes one in each hand, he put in a very insinuating appearance, ‘we encouraged young Falcon, for you know his name’s not Fellowes, when we thought he was Lord Falconberg’s heir, and now we mustn’t throw over Bella. If he isn’t the heir, he’s next thing to it, and we must be satisfied with that. Lord bless your heart, I shouldn’t take too much count of these babbies, they go off like ninepins. If he’s ever Lord Falconberg so much the better for Bella; we shall not live to see it, I dare say. If he is not, we needn’t send our only child abroad to knit stockings or to make potato salad.’

By such arguments as these Lady Cripplegate, having listened to her husband once to do the mischief, was persuaded to undo it to the extent of her power. Young sugar-bakers, tanners, silversmiths, woollen manufacturers, and others went mad when they heard of the sacrifice of so much money to mere affection. One or two electro-plated swells at the West End swore at those infernal painting-fellows now-a-days, and d—d your literary snobs, who ought not to be admitted into decent society ; but the fact that George Fellowes had stolen away the heart of the old man's daughter was true, and at the end of a given time he married her. Before which time however Lord Falconberg had disposed of the villa at Egmont, and divided his year between Hawkestone Castle and his house in town.

In another year or two Lady Falconberg had put the question of inheritance at rest for some time, unless the house was fated to a repetition of the catastrophe which paved the way for Harold to the title. She had yet another son, and then another, healthy and handsome boys who might look forward in due time themselves to strengthen the antiquity of the family. In the mean time they were to signalize themselves as young Eng-

land now delights to do, not as their father had done.

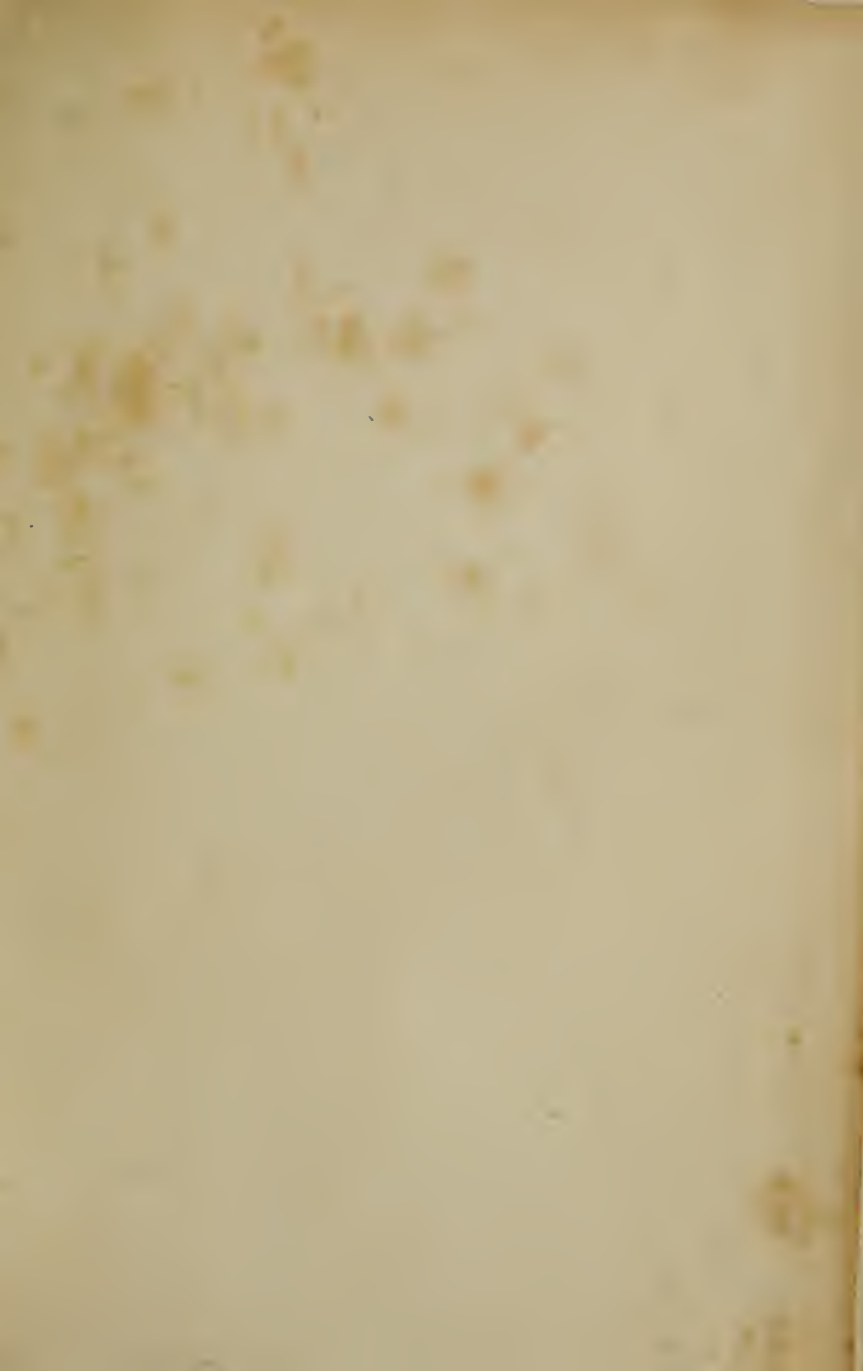
Some men may take exception to this. They will run and jump, and be great over flights of hurdles and on the flat for a mile. We old-fashioned fellows left all that at school, and carried none of it to the universities or into our regiment. They will not be quite so good with the gloves as their father was at Eton; but from what I hear they are less likely to stand in need of the accomplishment. They will grow up in a spirit of what is called muscular Christianity, if you know what that means. It includes much Alpine climbing, which theoretically I know I ought to abuse, but which practically I must admire; and recommend to be taken under the advice and restrictions of my good and active friend, Alfred Wills, until they have attained his own endurance, self-reliance, and dexterity. Will they ride steeple-chases like their father? possibly they may, for they will be brought up in the Hawkestone Vale, than which a more tempting line for a four-mile gallop can scarcely be found, even in Leicestershire. Lord Falconberg himself will be satisfied to have them stop here; but they will burn their own fingers before they learn wisdom from others' experience of fire. And all he has



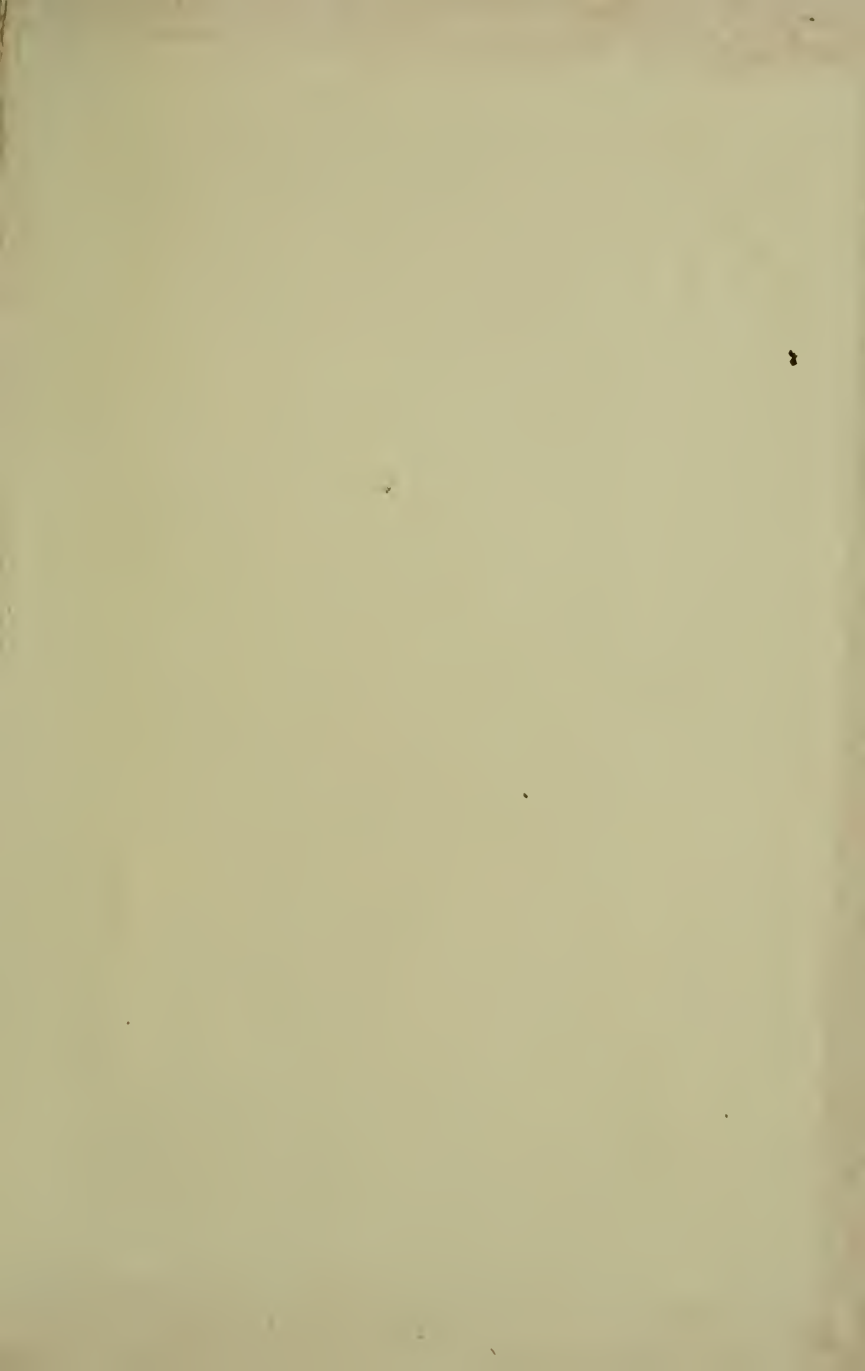
to point to is an earldom and their own mother, the most charming woman in England, as the ultimate result of his own follies. He will have to bridge over the gulf which has separated his early struggles from his middle life ; and though Lady Falconberg knows it all well, it's a subject never mentioned between them. One thing I'm afraid they may do, which will remind their father's friends of his early career. They may take to betting, the curse of the age ; calculated to undo all the good that advanced refinement and modern sciolism is presumed to effect ; and they may come out of the dangerous ordeal unscathed ; let us hope, with all our hearts, that they may. At present they are far from the threshold of these evils. Chubby-faced, handsome children preparing for Eton, the oldest of whom does no discredit to his title, Frederick, Lord Hawkestone, Lord Falconberg's Heir.

THE END.









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